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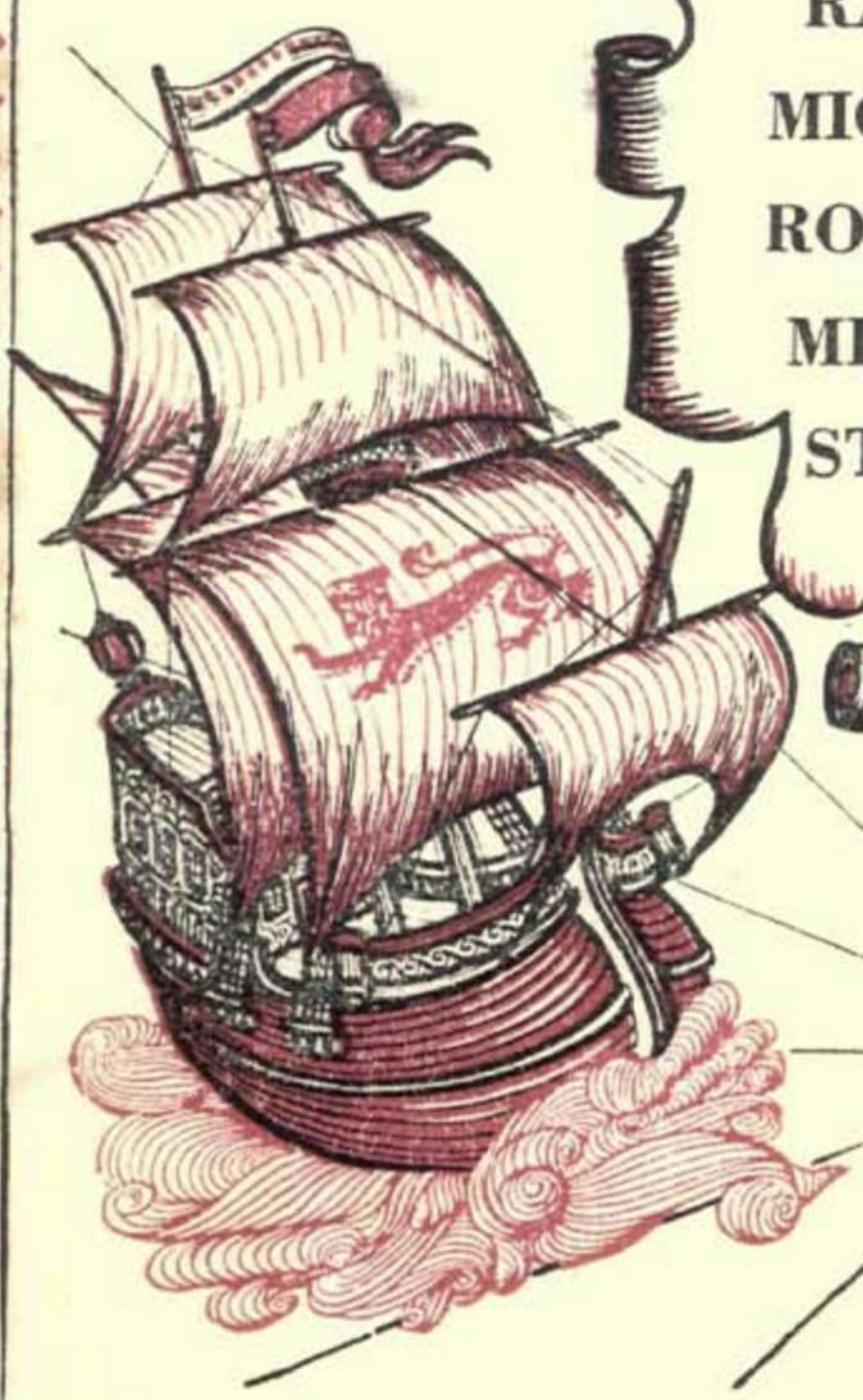

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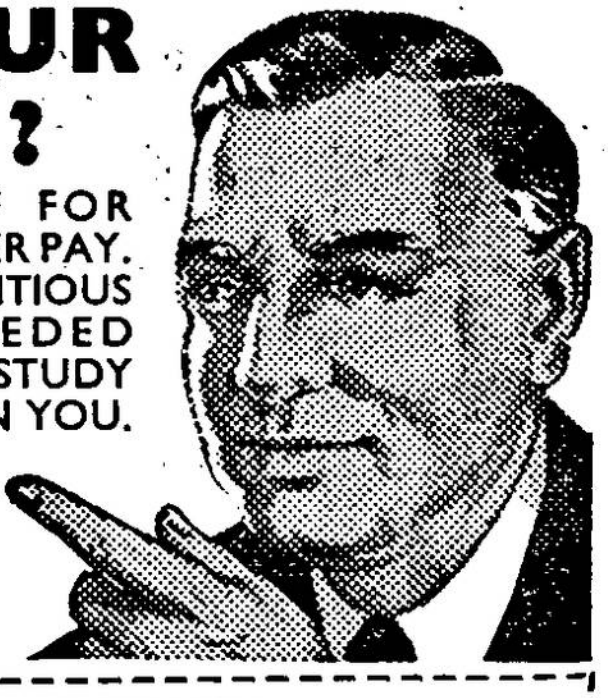

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Daphne

WHEN green as a river was the barley,
– Green as a river the rye,
I waded deep and began to parley
With a youth whom I heard sigh.
"I seek," said he, "a lovely lady,
A nymph as bright as a queen,
Like a tree that drips with pearls her shady
Locks of hair were seen.
And all the rivers became her flocks
Though their wool you cannot shear, –
Because of the love of her flowing locks . . .
The kingly Sun like a swain
Came strong, unheeding of her scorn,
Bathing in deeps where she has lain,
Sleeping upon her river lawn
And chasing her starry satyr train.
She fled, and changed into a tree –
That lovely fair-haired lady . . .
And now I seek through the sere summer
Where no trees are shady."

EDITH SITWELL

WHITEWASH

From the sneering face, came a rich, pleased chuckling

by ROSE MACAULAY

THE sea as it swung gently against the rocks was jade green, like the evening sky. I was reclining on thymy turf, reading *The Story of San Michele*. Six feet down in the sea my aunt was scrambling among broken marble wreckage that had been once an imperial bath. When she surfaced I looked up from Dr. Axel Munthe and said, " It's nice to know what an excellent man Tiberius actually was, after all one was brought up to think of him."

My aunt coughed up water and turned on her back to float.

" I know nothing of the sort," she said. " I would rather believe his contemporaries than these modern whitewashers. And I have the islanders with me, to a man, woman and child."

" Naturally," I agreed. " Timberio is their local industry. If he lost his wickedness, he would have nothing but a few ruined villas and baths and a rock up there by the Faro from which no one was ever thrown.

" What use would visitors have for a beneficent old gentleman who retired here to flee the corrupt world and commune with his soul ? Suetonius and Tacitus and all the legend-makers since are the local Bible. But they are wrong. Timberio has been cleared, and I am delighted that all these villas and baths were used by so saintly an emperor."

" One after another," said my aunt, " they take them from us. Nero. Tiberius. The Borgias. King John. Richard III. Are we to be deprived of all the monsters of the past ? Are they all to be of the present ? And how long will it be before our contemporary monsters have the whitewash buckets poured over them and emerge saints, or victims of circumstance, more sinned against than sinning ? Most of us are more sinning than sinned against ; why should monsters be exceptions ? "

I made no effort to convert my aunt on this subject. She required monsters and, so far as I was concerned, could have them.

" I shall go exploring the caves," I said. " Will you come ? "

" Not I," said my aunt. " When one thinks what went on in them," she added, primly, as she climbed out of the sea. " I am going back to the villa. Dinner at nine."

"I'll be back," I said. My aunt draped herself in her scarlet burnous and set off up the steep rock stairway that would conduct her in the end to the villa. I dropped into the warm twilight sea again, and swam round the next jut of rock.

Above me the island sloped down to the sea, smelling of pine and thyme and cistus and the stored heat of the August day. Below me lay Roman villas and baths that had slipped long since into the waves and got drowned. I had explored these remains often enough; what I now wanted was a cave.

There was one a little further on. I swam into it; it was a deep cave, thrusting far back into the rock. Round it, just above sea level, ran a broad ledge, slippery and green with seaweed. I hoisted myself on to it and walked along it. It was almost dark inside the cave. But, after walking a few yards, I felt a draught on my right, and saw a good-sized round opening in the rock.

I remembered tales told by the locals of passages that climbed up from caves to one or another of Timberio's villas. Perhaps this one did so. I entered it, meaning to explore it for a little way. It sloped gently up, and was about the height of my shoulders.

But I did not get far; a cold wind suddenly came against me like a hand on my chest, pushing me back. It struck me that I would rather explore that passage by day, and that I was inexplicably shivering, and had better get out of the cave and go home.

In a few moments I was back on the slippery ledge; the little waves were lapping against the rock with a sound like whispering voices—or was it sharp, frightened gasps? A frightened crowd, it sounded like; a collection of people scared out of their wits. I slipped down into the water and swam towards the cave's mouth.

Outside was the green evening sky, the green evening sea. At the entrance I felt, oddly, as if a strong tide were running against me; I swam, but made no progress; in fact, I was being pushed back. But there was no tide, and the sea was calm. I struck out harder, and was pushed back farther. I began to panic. What current was driving with such force into the cave that I could not swim against it? I remembered nightmare battles with Cornish tides that, swim as I would, carried me out to sea, the landmarks slipping from me in a losing race. I had been rescued by boats.

There was no boat now, and I could not get out. I was growing tired; I was not a strong swimmer. Suppose I had to spend the night on that slippery, slimy ledge, among that whispering, frightened chatter? And would the sea rise? The Mediterranean is not quite tideless. I went on struggling; for a moment it seemed to me that I made headway. Then, looking up, I saw a dark shape, floating quietly just outside the cave's mouth; it was just under the surface

but for a sharp, sail-shaped fin ; it seemed to wait, rolling to and fro, in no hurry, but just waiting.

That decided me ; I retreated into the cave and climbed on to the ledge. I was shaking so much that I could scarcely make it. If the shark should enter the cave, I would climb into the passage.

I sat on the cold ledge, huddled up, my arms round my knees. It seemed to me that the chattering and whispering of the sea slapping against the rocky wall was louder, quicker, more verbal. The atmosphere in the cave was tense ; it was sheer terror. It caught me like a wave, drowning me in cold panic. I have never known fear so intense, such submerging anguish.

Then, above the whispered clamour, rose a soft, jeering voice from the passage behind me. It said, " Veni, cete, veni." The next moment the cave mouth darkened ; the great shark drove in with a noise of rushing water. I saw its white belly and its row of terrible teeth. I did not wait ; I plunged head first into the passage in the rock. Then something more than a wind drove against me ; it was as if some other strength met mine, pushing me back. I gripped a jut of rock with both hands ; my feet were tensed against the side wall of the passage.

I looked into the darkness of the corridor that wound ahead ; suddenly on it there hung palely, as in phosphorescent light, a head and face I knew : I had seen it on coins, in busts, in reliefs. A handsome, sneering face, its lips curled now in a sensual smile. From them came a rich, pleased chuckling.

And from the cave behind me came a snapping of jaws and a thin screaming, and splash after splash, as if things were being dragged down from the ledge into the water. At each splash came the low chuckling.

I was being pushed, but half-heartedly, as if the pusher's attention were concentrated elsewhere ; or as if there were no real bodily contact. I held on to my position with hands and feet ; I was not really much afraid of losing it, for I was alive, and the pusher had been dead for close on two thousand years, and what physical force can the dead and the living exert over one another ?

My terror was of the scene behind me ; the thin screams, the snapping jaws, the splashing . . . And of the leering phosphorescent face hanging in the dark rock corridor in front of me ; and of that enjoying chuckle. I shut my eyes, but could not stop my ears.

I do not know how long the ghastly scene lasted. Before very long I realised that there was silence in the cave, but for a heavy, gorged, wallowing sound. Then the drawling voice said, " Abi, cete, abi hinc." And the heavy shape seemed to flounder through the water, out of the cave into the sea beyond.

I opened my eyes. The face was gone. I seemed quite alone; the soft slap-slap of water against rock was no longer like whispering voices. I slithered down to the ledge, staring in horror at the deep green water below me, now silvered by the first long shafts of a rising moon. I don't know what I feared to see in it—mangled limbs, ripples running red—but there was only green sea-water touched with silver. All the same I did not get into it; I followed the ledge round to the cave's mouth, and peered warily out. No dark shape was in sight; no fin. I knew I was alone.

I slipped into the moon-struck sea and swam round the jut of rock to the place where we had bathed among the ruins of the Roman bath. My bathing-wrap lay there. Putting it over my shivering body, I was back in the twentieth century. The tension slackened; I lay limply on the rocks and was sick.

What time it was I had no idea. Getting up, I saw *The Story of San Michele* lying open where I had put it down; I picked it up and climbed the path up the hill. I came in through the open French window; my aunt lay smoking in a long chair.

"So there you are at last," she said. "I've kept your dinner for you. Do you know," she added, reflectively, "I was beginning to fear that Timberio had got you, after all."

"I began to think so too," I told her. "And you will be glad to know that Suetonius and Tacitus and the locals are all perfectly right about him, and that Dr. Munthe and Norman and the other whitewashers are perfectly wrong; they haven't the faintest idea what they are talking about."

"No," my aunt tranquilly agreed. "Whitewashers never have. Evil does exist, and monsters have always been monsters. Nero, Tiberius, the Borgias, Richard III, John, our contemporary tyrants . . . I believe in them all."

"Or," I asked myself presently, when warmed and clothed and fed, "can I have had some kind of a fit? I shall tell Norman about it tomorrow, and ask what he thinks."

I met Norman in his favourite piazza café the next morning. Though the most patriotic of islanders, he told me that I had been the victim of an erroneous mass mythology. For Timberio had been a most excellent man, kind of heart and temperate of habit.

"Only," he added, re-filling his three glasses, "you've hardly begun yet. Timberio, according to the Capraeans, could do much better than that. You must try some of the other caves."

* * *

When you have finished reading this copy of ARGOSY, *why not pass it on to a member of H.M. Forces?*

★ SCIENCE FICTION CHOICE

NON-STOP

The approaching thunder of a train swelled into a sharp roar of wheels

by A. J. DEUTSCH

IN a complex and ingenious pattern, the subway had spread out from a focus at Park Street. A shunt connected the Lechmere line with the Ashmont for tube trains southbound, and with the Forest Hills line for those northbound. Harvard and Brookline had been linked with a tunnel that passed through Kenmore Under. During rush hours every other underground train was switched through the Kenmore Branch back to Egleston.

The Kenmore Branch joined the Maverick Tunnel near Fields Corner. It connected Copley Over with Scollay Square then dipped down again to join the Cambridge line at Boylston. The Boylston shuttle had finally tied together the seven principal lines on four different levels.

It went into service, you remember, on March 3rd. After that, a tube train could travel from any one station to any other station in the whole System.

There were two hundred and twenty-seven trains running the subways every weekday, and they carried about a million and a half passengers. The Cambridge-Dorchester train that disappeared on March 4th was Number 86. Nobody missed it at first. During the evening rush, the traffic was a little heavier than usual on that line. But a crowd is a crowd. The controller at the Milk Street Cross-Over called the Harvard checker for an extra train after the hockey game that night, and the Harvard checker relayed the call to the yards. The dispatcher there sent out 87, which had been put to bed at ten o'clock, as usual. He didn't notice that 86 was missing.

It was near the peak of the rush the next morning that Jack O'Brien, at the Park Street Control, called Warren Sweeney at the Forest Hills yards and told him to put another train on the Cambridge run. Sweeney was short, so he went to the board and scanned it for a spare train and crew. Then, for the first time, he noticed that

Gallagher had not checked out the night before. He put the tag up and left a note. Gallagher was due on at ten.

At 10.30, Sweeney was down looking at the board again, and he noticed Gallagher's tag still up, and the note where he had left it. He groused to the checker and asked if Gallagher had come in late. The checker said he hadn't seen him at all that morning.

Then Sweeney wanted to know who was running 86. A few minutes later he found that Dorkin's card was still up, although it was Dorkin's day off. It was 11.30 before he finally realized that he had lost a train.

Sweeney spent the next hour and a half on the phone, and he questioned every dispatcher, controller, and checker on the whole system. When he finished his lunch at 1.30, he covered the whole network again.

At 4.40, just before he left for the day, he reported the matter, with some indignation, to Central Traffic. The phones buzzed through the tunnels and workshops until nearly midnight before the General Manager was finally notified at his home.

It was the engineer on the main switchboard who, late in the morning of the 6th, first associated the missing train with the newspaper stories about the sudden rash of missing persons. He tipped off the *Transcript* and by the end of the lunch-hour three papers had Extras on the streets. That was the way the story got out.

Kelvin Whyte, the General Manager, spent a good part of that afternoon with the police. They checked with Gallagher's wife, and Dorkin's. The driver and the conductor had not been home since the morning of the 4th.

By mid-afternoon, it was clear to the police that three hundred and fifty Bostonians, more or less, had been lost with the train. The System buzzed, and Whyte nearly expired with simple exasperation. But the train was not found.

Roger Tupelo, the Harvard mathematician, stepped into the picture on the evening of the 6th. He reached Whyte by phone, late, at his home, and told him he had some ideas about the missing train. Then he took a taxi to Whyte's home in Newton and had the first of many talks with Whyte about Number 86.

Whyte was an intelligent man, a good organizer, and not without imagination. "But I don't know what you're talking about!" he expostulated.

Tupelo was resolved to be patient. "This is a very hard thing for *anybody* to understand, Mr. Whyte," he said. "I can see why you are puzzled. But it's the only explanation. The train has vanished, and the people on it. But the System is closed. Trains are conserved. It's somewhere on the System!"

Whyte's voice grew louder again. "And I tell you, Dr. Tupelo, that train is *not* on the System! It is *not*! You can't overlook a seven-car train carrying four hundred passengers. The System has been combed. Do you think I'm trying to *hide* the train?"

"Of course not. Now look, let's be reasonable. We know the train was en route to Cambridge at 8.40 a.m. on the 4th. At least twenty of the missing people probably boarded the train a few minutes earlier at Washington, and forty more at Park Street Under. A few got off at these stations. And that's the last. The ones who were going to Kendall, to Central, to Harvard—they never got there. The train did not get to Cambridge."

"I know that, Dr. Tupelo," Whyte said savagely. "In the tunnel under the River, the train turned into a boat. It left the tunnel and sailed for Africa."

"No, Mr. Whyte. I'm trying to tell you. It hit a node."

Whyte was livid. "What is a node?" he exploded. "The System keeps the tracks clear. Nothing on the tracks but trains, no nodes left lying around—"

"You still don't understand. A node is not an obstruction. It's a singularity. A pole of high order."

Tupelo's explanations that night did not greatly clarify the situation for Kelvin Whyte. But at two in the morning, the General Manager conceded to Tupelo the privilege of examining the master-maps of the System. He put in a call first to the police, who could not assist him with his first attempt to master topology, and then, finally, to Central Traffic. Tupelo went down there alone, and pored over the maps till morning. He had coffee and a roll, and then went to Whyte's office.

He found the General Manager on the telephone. There was a conversation concerning another, more elaborate inspection of the Dorchester-Cambridge tunnel under the Charles River. When the conversation ended, Whyte slammed the telephone into its cradle and glared at Tupelo.

The mathematician spoke first. "I think it's probably the new shuttle that did this," he said.

Whyte gripped the edge of his desk and prowled silently through his vocabulary until he had located some civil words. "Dr. Tupelo," he said, "I have been awake all night going over your theory. I don't understand it all. I don't know what the Boylston shuttle has to do with this."

"Remember what I was saying last night about the connective properties of networks?" Tupelo asked quietly. "Remember the Mobius band we made—*the surface with one face and one edge*? Remember this—?" and he removed a little glass Klein bottle from his pocket and placed it on the desk.

Whyte sat back in his chair and stared wordlessly at the mathematician. Three emotions marched across his face in quick succession—anger, bewilderment, and utter dejection.

Tupelo went on. "Mr. Whyte, the System is a network of amazing topological complexity. It was already complex before the Boylston shuttle was installed, and of a high order of connectivity. But this shuttle makes the network unique. I don't fully understand it, but the situation seems to be something like this: the shuttle has made the connectivity of the whole System of an order so high that I don't know how to calculate it. I suspect the connectivity has become infinite."

The General Manager listened as though in a daze. He kept his eyes glued to the little Klein bottle.

"The Mobius band," Tupelo said, "has unusual properties because it has a singularity. The Klein bottle, with two singularities, manages to be inside itself. The topologists know surfaces with as many as a thousand singularities, and they have properties that make the Mobius band and the Klein bottle both look simple. But a network with *infinite connectivity* must have an infinite number of singularities. Can you imagine what the properties of that network could be?"

After a long pause, Tupelo added: "I can't either. To tell the truth, the structure of the System, with the Boylston shuttle is completely beyond me. I can only guess."

Whyte swivelled his eyes up from the desk at a moment when anger was the dominant feeling within him. "And you call yourself a mathematician, Professor Tupelo!" he said.

Tupelo almost laughed aloud. The incongruity, the absolute foolishness of the situation, all but overwhelmed him. He smiled thinly, and said: "I'm no topologist. Really, Mr. Whyte, I'm a tyro in the field—not much better acquainted with it than you are. Mathematics is a big pasture. I happen to be an algebraist."

His candour softened Whyte a little. "Well then," he ventured, "if you don't understand it, maybe we should call in a topologist. Are there any in Boston?"

"Yes and no," Tupelo answered. "The best in the world is Merritt Turnbull. He can't be reached. I've tried for three days."

"Is he out of town?" Whyte asked. "We'll send for him—emergency."

"I don't know. Professor Turnbull is a bachelor. He lives alone at the Brattle Club. He has not been seen since the morning of the 4th."

"Was he on the train?" Whyte asked tensely.

"I don't know," the mathematician replied. "What do you think?"

There was a long silence. Whyte looked alternately at Tupelo and at the glass object on the desk. " I don't understand it," he said finally. " We've looked everywhere on the System. There was no way for the train to get out."

" The train didn't get out. It's still on the System," Tupelo said.

" Where ? "

Tupelo shrugged. " The train has no real 'where.' The whole System is without real ' whereness.' It's double-valued, or worse."

" How can we find it ? "

" I don't think we can," Tupelo said.

There was another long silence. Whyte broke it with a loud exclamation. He rose suddenly, and sent the Klein bottle flying across the room.

" You are crazy, Professor ! " he shouted. " Between midnight tonight and 6 a.m. tomorrow, we'll get every train out of the tunnels. I'll send in three hundred men, to comb every inch of the tracks—every inch of the one hundred and eighty-three miles. We'll find the train ! Now, please excuse me." He glared at Tupelo.

Tupelo left the office. He felt tired, completely exhausted. Mechanically, he walked along Washington Street towards the Essex Station. Halfway down the stairs, he stopped abruptly, looked around him slowly. Then he ascended again to the street and hailed a taxi. At home, he helped himself to a double whisky. He fell into bed.

At 3.30 that afternoon he met his class in " Algebra of Fields and Rings." After a quick supper at the Crimson Spa, he went to his flat and spent the evening in a second attempt to analyse the connective properties of the System. The attempt was vain, but the mathematician came to a few important conclusions. About 11 o'clock he telephoned Whyte at Central Traffic.

" I think you may want to consult me during tonight's search," he said. " May I come down ? "

The General Manager was none too gracious about Tupelo's offer of help. He indicated that the System would solve this little problem without any help from hare-brained professors who thought that whole subway trains could jump off into the fourth dimension. Tupelo submitted to Whyte's unkindness, then went to bed.

At about 4 a.m. the telephone awakened him. His caller was a contrite Kelvin Whyte.

" Perhaps I was a bit hasty last night, Professor," he stammered. " You may be able to help us after all. Could you come down to the Milk Street Cross-Over ? "

Tupelo agreed readily. He felt none of the satisfaction he had anticipated. He called a taxi, and in less than half an hour was at the prescribed station.

At the foot of the stairs, on the upper level, he saw that the tunnel was brightly lighted, as during normal operation of the System. But the platforms were deserted except for a tight little knot of seven men at the far end. As he walked towards the group, he noticed that two were policemen. He observed a one-car train on the track beside the platform. The forward door was open, the car brightly lit, and empty. Whyte heard his footsteps and greeted him sheepishly.

" Thanks for coming down, Professor," he said, extending his hand. " Gentlemen, Dr. Roger Tupelo, of Harvard. Dr. Tupelo, Mr. Kennedy, our Chief Engineer ; Mr. Wilson, representing the Mayor ; Dr. Gannot, of Mercy Hospital." Whyte did not bother to introduce the driver and the two policemen.

" How do you do ? " said Tupelo. " Any results, Mr. Whyte ? "

The General Manager exchanged embarrassed glances with his companions. " Well . . yes, Dr. Tupelo," he finally answered. " I think we do have some results, of a kind."

" Has the train been seen ? "

" Yes," said Whyte. " That is, practically seen. At least, we know it's somewhere in the tunnels." The six others nodded their agreement.

Tupelo was not surprised to learn that the train was still on the System. After all, the System was closed. " Would you mind telling me just what happened ? " Tupelo insisted.

" I hit a red signal," the driver volunteered. " Just outside the Copley junction."

" The tracks have been completely cleared of all trains," Whyte explained, " except for this one. We've been riding on it, all over the System, for four hours now. When Edmunds, here, hit a red light at the Copley junction, he stopped, of course. I thought the light must be defective, and told him to go ahead. But then we heard another train pass the junction."

" Did you see it ? " Tupelo asked.

" We couldn't see it. The light is placed just behind a curve. But we all heard it. There's no doubt the train went through the junction. And it must have been Number 86, because our car was the only other one on the tracks."

" What happened then ? "

" Well, then the light changed to yellow, and Edmunds went ahead."

" Did he follow the other train ? "

"No. We couldn't be sure which way it was going. We must have guessed wrong."

"How long ago did this happen?"

"At 1.38, the first time—"

"Oh," said Tupelo, "then it happened again later?"

"Yes. But not at the same spot, of course. We hit another red signal near South Station at 2.15. And then at 3.28—"

Tupelo interrupted the General Manager. "Did you see the train at 2.15?"

"We didn't even hear it, that time. Edmunds tried to catch it, but it must have turned off on to the Boylston shuttle."

"What happened at 3.28?"

"Another red light. Near Park Street. We heard the train, above and ahead of us."

"But you didn't see it?"

"No. There is a little slope beyond the light. But we all heard it. The only thing I don't understand, Dr. Tupelo, is how that train could run the tracks for nearly five days without anybody seeing . . ."

Whyte's words trailed off into silence, and his right hand went up in a peremptory gesture for quiet. In the distance, below them, the low metallic thunder of a fast-rolling train swelled up suddenly into a sharp shrill roar of wheels. The platform vibrated perceptibly as the train passed.

"Now we've got it!" Whyte exclaimed. "Right past the men on the platform below!" He broke into a run towards the stairs to the lower level. All the others followed him, except Tupelo. He thought he knew what was going to happen.

It did. Before Whyte reached the stairs, a policeman bounded up to the top. "Did you see it?" he shouted.

Whyte stopped in his tracks, and the others with him.

"Did you see that train?" the policeman from the lower level asked again, as two more men came running up the stairs.

"What happened?" Wilson wanted to know.

"Didn't *you* see it?" snapped Kennedy.

"Of course not," the policeman replied. "It passed through up here."

"It did *not*," roared Whyte. "Down there!"

The six men with Whyte glowered at the three from the lower level. Tupelo walked to Whyte's elbow. "The train can't be seen, Mr. Whyte," he said quietly.

Whyte looked down at him in utter disbelief. "You heard it yourself. It passed right below—"

"Can we go back to our carriage, Mr. Whyte?" Tupelo asked. "I think we ought to talk a little."

Whyte nodded dumbly, then turned to the policeman and the others who had been watching at the lower level. "You really didn't see it?" he begged them.

"We heard it," the policeman answered. "It passed up here, going that way, I think," and he gestured with his thumb.

"Get back downstairs, Maloney," one of the policemen with Whyte commanded. Maloney scratched his head, turned, and disappeared below. The two other men followed him.

Tupelo led the original group to the carriage beside the station platform. They went in and took seats, silently. Then they all watched the mathematician and waited.

"You didn't call me down here tonight just to tell me you'd found the missing train," Tupelo began, looking at Whyte. "Has this sort of thing happened before?"

Whyte squirmed in his seat and exchanged glances with the Chief Engineer. "Not exactly like this," he said, evasively, "but there have been some funny things."

"Like what?" Tupelo snapped.

"Well, like the red lights. The watchers near Kendall found a red light at the same time we came across the one near South Station."

"Go on."

"Mr. Sweeney called me from Forest Hills at Park Street Under. He heard the train there just two minutes after we heard it at the Copley junction. Twenty-eight track miles away."

"As a matter of fact, Dr. Tupelo," Wilson broke in, "several dozen men have seen lights go red, or have heard the train, or both, within the last four hours. The thing acts as though it can be in several places at once."

"It can," Tupelo said.

"We keep getting reports of watchers seeing the thing," the Chief Engineer added. "Well, not exactly seeing it, either, but everything except that. Sometimes at two or even three places, far apart, at the same time. It's sure to be on the tracks. Maybe the cars are uncoupled."

"Are you really sure it's on the tracks, Mr. Kennedy?" Tupelo asked.

"Positive," the engineer said. "The dynamometers at the power house show that it's drawing power. It's been drawing power all night. So at 3.30 we broke the circuits. Cut the power."

"What happened?"

"Nothing," Whyte answered. "Nothing at all. The power was off for twenty minutes. During that time, not one of the two hundred and fifty men in the tunnels saw a red light or heard a train. But the power wasn't on for five minutes before we had

two reports again—one from Arlington, the other from Egleston."

There was a long silence after Whyte had finished speaking. In the tunnel below, one man could be heard calling something to another. Tupelo looked at his watch. The time was 5.20.

" In short, Dr. Tupelo," the General Manager finally said, " we are compelled to admit that there may be something in your theory." The others nodded agreement.

" Thank you, gentlemen," Tupelo said.

The physician cleared his throat. " Now about the passengers," he began. " Have you any idea what— ? "

" None," Tupelo interrupted.

" What ought we to do, Dr. Tupelo ? " the Mayor's representative asked.

" I don't know. What can you do ? "

" As I understand it from Mr. Whyte," Wilson continued, " the train has . . . well, it has jumped into another dimension. It isn't really on the System at all. It's just gone. Is that right ? "

" In a manner of speaking."

" And this . . . er . . . peculiar behaviour has resulted from certain mathematical properties associated with the new Boylston shuttle ? "

" Correct."

" And there is nothing we can do to bring the train back to . . . uh . . . this dimension ? "

" I know of nothing."

Wilson took the bit in his teeth. " In that case, gentlemen," he said, " our course is clear. First, we must close off the new shuttle, so this fantastic thing can never happen again. Then, since the missing train is really gone, in spite of all these red lights and noises, we can resume normal operation of the System. At least, there will be no danger of collision—which has worried you so much, Whyte. As for the missing train and the people on it—" He gestured them into infinity. " Do you agree, Dr. Tupelo ? " he asked the mathematician.

Tupelo shook his head slowly. " Not entirely, Mr. Wilson," he answered. " Now, please keep in mind that I don't fully comprehend what has happened. It's unfortunate that you won't find anybody who can give a good explanation. The one man who might have done so is Professor Turnbull, and he was on the train. But in any case, you will want to check my conclusions against those of some competent topologists. I can put you in touch with several.

" Now, with regard to the recovery of the missing train, I can say that I think this is not hopeless. There is a finite probability, as I see it, that the train will eventually pass from the non-spatial

part of the network, which it now occupies, back to the spatial part. Since the non-spatial part is wholly inaccessible, there is unfortunately nothing we can do to bring about this transition, or even to predict when or how it will occur. But the possibility of the transition will vanish if the Boylston shuttle is taken out. It is just this section of the track that gives the network its essential singularities. If the singularities are removed, the train can never reappear. Is that clear ? "

It was not clear, of course, but the seven listening men nodded.

Tupelo continued. " As for the continued operation of the System while the missing train is in the non-spatial part of the network, I can only give you the facts as I see them, and leave to your judgment the difficult decision to be drawn from them.

" The transition back to the spatial part is unpredictable, as I have already told you. There is no way to know when it will occur, or where. In particular, there is a fifty-per-cent probability that, if and when the train reappears, it will be running on the wrong track. Then there will be a collision, of course."

The Chief Engineer asked : " To rule out this possibility, Dr. Tupelo, couldn't we leave the Boylston shuttle open, but send no trains through it ? Then, when the missing train reappears on the shuttle, it cannot meet another train."

" That precaution would be ineffective, Mr. Kennedy," Tupelo answered. " You see, the train can reappear anywhere on the System. It is true that the System owes its topological complexity to the new shuttle. But, with the shuttle in the System, it is now the whole System that possesses infinite connectivity. In other words, this property is *derived* from the shuttle, but *belongs* to the whole System. Remember that the train made its first transition at a point between Park and Kendall, more than three miles away from the shuttle.

" There is one question more you will want answered. If you decide to go on operating the System, with the Boylston shuttle left in until the train reappears, can this happen again, to another train ? I am not certain of the answer, but I think it is : ' No.' I believe an exclusion principle operates here, so that only one train at a time can occupy the non-spatial network."

The physician rose from his seat. " Dr. Tupelo," he began, timorously, " when the train does reappear, will the passengers— ? "

" I don't know about the people on the train," Tupelo cut in. " The topological theory does not consider such matters." He looked quickly at each of the seven tired, querulous faces before him. " I am sorry, gentlemen," he added, somewhat more gently. " I simply do not know."

To Whyte, he added: "I think I can be of no more help tonight. You know where to reach me." And, turning on his heel, he left the carriage and climbed the stairs. He found dawn spilling over the street, dissolving the shadows of night.

That impromptu conference in a lonely subway carriage was never reported in the papers. Nor were the full results of the night-long vigil over the dark and twisted tunnels.

During the week that followed, Tupelo participated in four more formal conferences with Kelvin Whyte and certain city officials. At two of these, other topologists were present. Ornstein was imported to Boston from Philadelphia, Kashta from Chicago, and Michaelis from Los Angeles. The mathematicians were unable to reach agreement. None of the three would fully endorse Tupelo's conclusions, although Kashta indicated that there *might* be something in them.

The more deeply Tupelo analysed the problem, the more fully he was convinced of the essential correctness of his first analysis. He gave the subject his full attention for only a week. Then his other duties compelled him to lay the analysis aside. He resolved to go back to the problem later in the spring, after term was over.

Meanwhile, the System was operated as though nothing untoward had happened. The General Manager and the Mayor's representative had somehow managed to forget the night of the search, or at least to reinterpret what they had seen and not seen. The newspapers and the general public speculated wildly, and they kept continuing pressure on Whyte.

A number of suits were filed against the System on behalf of persons who had lost a relative. The State stepped into the affair and prepared its own thorough investigation. Recriminations were sounded in the halls of Congress. A garbled version of Tupelo's theory eventually found its way into the press. He ignored it, and it was soon forgotten.

The weeks passed, and then a month. The State's investigation was completed. The newspaper stories moved from the first page to the second; to the twenty-third; and then stopped. The missing persons did not return.

One day in mid-April, Tupelo travelled by subway again, from Charles Street to Harvard. He sat stiffly in the front of the first carriage, and watched the tracks and grey tunnel walls hurl themselves at the train. Twice the train stopped for a red light, and Tupelo found himself wondering whether the other train was really just ahead, or just beyond space. He half hoped, out of curiosity, that his exclusion principle was wrong, that the train

might make the transition. But he arrived at Harvard on time. Only he among the passengers had found the trip exciting.

The next week he made another trip by subway, and again the next. As experiments, they were unsuccessful, and much less tense than the first ride in mid-April. Tupelo began to doubt his own analysis. Some time in May, he reverted to the practice of travelling by subway between his Beacon Hill apartment and his office at Harvard. His mind stopped racing down the knotted grey caverns ahead of the train. He read the morning newspaper, or the abstracts in *Reviews of Modern Mathematics*.

Then there was one morning when he looked up from the newspaper and sensed something. He pushed panic back on its stiff quivering spring, and looked quickly out of the window at his right. The lights of the car showed the black and grey lines of wall-spots streaking by. The tracks ground out their familiar steely dissonance. The train rounded a curve and crossed a junction that he remembered. Swiftly, he recalled boarding the train at Charles Street, noting the girl on the ice-carnival poster at Kendall, meeting the southbound train going into Central.

He looked at the man sitting beside him, with a lunch-box on his lap. The other seats were filled, and there were a dozen or so strap-hangers. A mealy-faced youth near the door smoked a cigarette, in violation of the rules. Two girls behind him across the carriage were discussing a meeting. In the seat ahead, a young woman was scolding her little son. The man in the seat ahead of that was reading the paper. The advertisement above him extolled Florida oranges.

He looked again at the man two seats ahead and fought down the terror within. He studied that man. What was it? Greying brown hair; a roundish head; wan complexion; rather flat features; a thick neck, with the hairline a little low, a little ragged; a grey pin-stripe suit. While Tupelo watched, the man waved a fly away from his left ear. He swayed a little with the train. His newspaper was folded vertically down the middle. His *newspaper*! It was dated last March!

Tupelo's eyes swivelled to the man beside him. Below his lunch-box was a paper. Today's. He turned in his seat and looked behind him. A young man held the *Transcript* open at the sports pages. The date was March 4th. Tupelo's eyes raced up and down the carriage. A dozen passengers were carrying papers ten weeks old.

Tupelo lunged out of his seat. He crossed the carriage in a bound and pulled the cord above the windows. The brakes sawed and screeched at the tracks, and the train ground to a stop. The startled passengers eyed Tupelo with hostility.

At the rear of the car, the door flew open, and a tall, thin man in a blue uniform burst in. Tupelo spoke first.

" Mr. Dorkin ? " he called, vehemently.

The conductor stopped short and groped for words.

" There's been a serious accident, Dorkin," Tupelo said loudly, to carry over the rising swell of protest from the passengers. " Get Gallagher back here right away ! "

Dorkin reached up and pulled the cord four times. " What happened ? " he asked. Tupelo ignored the question, and asked one of his own. " Where have you been, Dorkin ? "

The conductor's face was blank. " In the next car, but—"

Tupelo cut him off. He glanced at his watch, then shouted at the passengers. " It's ten minutes to nine on May 17th ! "

The announcement stilled the rising clamour for a moment. The passengers exchanged bewildered glances.

" Look at your newspapers ! " Tupelo shouted. " Your newspapers ! " The passengers began to buzz. As they discovered each other's papers, the voices rose. Tupelo took Dorkin's arm and led him to the rear of the car. " What time is it ? " he asked.

" 8.21," Dorkin said, looking at his watch.

" Open the door," said Tupelo, motioning ahead. " Let me out. Where's the phone ? "

Dorkin followed Tupelo's directions. He pointed to a niche in the tunnel wall a hundred yards ahead. Tupelo vaulted to the ground and raced down the narrow gap between the cars and the wall. " Central Traffic ! " he barked at the operator. He waited a few seconds, and saw that a train had stopped at the red signal behind his train. Flashlights were advancing down the tunnel. He saw Gallagher's legs running down the tunnel on the other side of 86.

" Get me Whyte ! " he commanded, when Central Traffic answered. " Emergency ! "

There was a delay. He heard voices rising from the train beside him. The sound was mixed—anger, fear, hysteria.

" Hullo ! " he shouted. " Hullo ! Emergency ! Get me Whyte ! "

" I'll take it," a man's voice said at the other end of the line. " Whyte's busy ! "

" Number 86 is back," Tupelo called. " Between Central and Harvard now. Don't know when it made the jump. I caught it at Charles ten minutes ago, and didn't notice it until this minute." The man at the other end gulped hard enough to carry over the telephone. " The passengers ? " he croaked.

" All right, the ones that are left," Tupelo said. " Some must have got off already at Kendall and Central."

" Where have they been ? "

Tupelo dropped the receiver from his ear and stared at it, his mouth wide open. Then he slammed the receiver on the hook and ran back to the open door.

Eventually, order was restored, and within a half-hour the train proceeded to Harvard. At the station, the police took all passengers into protective custody. Whyte himself arrived at Harvard before the train did. Tupelo found him on the platform.

Whyte motioned weakly towards the passengers. "They're really all right?" he asked.

"Perfectly," said Tupelo. "Don't know they've been away."

"Any sign of Professor Turnbull?" asked the General Manager.

"I didn't see him. He probably got off at Kendall, as usual."

Tupelo stared past Whyte, and down and down the tracks.

"We've got to find Turnbull," Whyte said.

Tupelo looked at Whyte and smiled thinly.

"Do you really think Turnbull got off this train at Kendall?"

"Of course!" answered Whyte. "It's too bad. I'd like to see him!"

"So would I!" Tupelo answered. "By the way, now is the time to close the Boylston shuttle."

"Now is too late," Whyte said. "Train 143 vanished twenty-five minutes ago between Egleston and Dorchester."

* * *

RUNNING BUFFET

A man sitting in a railway carriage held on his lap a large parcel of sandwiches from which every quarter of an hour he would remove one in order to feed it into a square cardboard box on the luggage rack. At last the other occupants of the carriage could bear the pangs of curiosity no longer and asked the man what he was doing.

"Why," he explained, "I'm just feeding ham sandwiches to my turtle up there."

"But how nice!" the other occupants exclaimed. "And may we have a look at him?"

"By all means," replied the man. So they got the cardboard box down from the rack and opened the lid. But to their surprise they could see nothing in the box but slices of bread and butter.

"Why," they expostulated. "But there's no ham in these sandwiches!"

"No," laughed the man. "And it's only a mock turtle too!"

JOHN WALLER, *Shaggy Dog*

SECRET COMPANY

**He knew this was the hour of decision—
to go on or to give in**

by MICHAEL FOSTER

AFTER these years of pain and ruin, he had found a way to put himself to sleep. Sometimes it worked.

In the night of the world, he thought, there must be lots of people who lie staring into the dark. You couldn't tell by looking at the faces along a brisk morning street. And probably his own face told as little of the long hours' struggle for some sleep.

Lying alone in a cheap hotel room, he would force his mind to travel back, far back, wincing away from the years of promise and of success ; until he could feel again the lost peace of a country boyhood in America. The whispering silence of an old farmhouse on a winter midnight ; and the tired, gentle steps of your mother creaking up the stairs, her mending folded and put away, and the kitchen lamp blown out.

And the things you knew then : the way the little deer-mice of the woods find an abandoned bird's nest, and thatch it over with the dried grasses of autumn. So when the coverlet of snow seals them in, they sleep safe and warm through the blizzards that toss the branches. And in the early frosts you had tracked the raccoons to their den in an ancient hollow sycamore under the hill, where they too were sleeping now, snug and high above the snow.

Thinking of those things, you might remember the fading night-thoughts of a boy, and you might drift off to sleep. But you had to go all the way back. To innocence, to the good lost things. You couldn't let yourself think of what had happened since.

Or else you might remember your brother, the beloved little brother—strangely dear. A little tough guy with cracked knuckles and eyes like angels laughing, who . . .. who, grown up, had smashed other lives along with his own.

In the slow-beating heart, the heart that beats with a quieter courage than the mind or the quivering nerves can have, Robert McLean knew that self-pity is the worst surrender you can make. Yet there is a lonely comfort sometimes in knowing that you who lie awake because you are tired and the burden so heavy—you have a lot of secret company in the world tonight.

And then, unexpectedly, it is morning ; so you have slept,

after all. In the morning sunlight, and in the dull roar of the city beginning another day's work, you know that you too can keep going and keep on doing your part. And your earnings can somehow always be made to stretch, to take care of the helpless ones. In the morning, there is pride in making the long, good fight.

For a moment more, Robert McLean lay there staring at the blank ceiling, consciously gathering the strength for this day, its work. Then he got up. Shaving, he did not know that his face was too gaunt for thirty-eight, and scarred with thought ; men who think little of themselves can shave for years without ever noticing any particular change. He might have been absently amused for a moment if anyone had told him that his face was saved from deep sadness, from austerity, only by a humorous, crooked slant of one dark brow.

Coming back into the bedroom he dressed, surrounded by his shelves of books. He had lived in this hotel for a long time ; he had fixed the room up as best he could. The clean shirt he got out was frayed at the cuffs. With his nail-scissors he trimmed off the frazzled threads.

Carrying his hat and overcoat, he went out into the shabby-respectable corridor, with its worn red carpet. The spry old man who ran the lift beamed at him with cheery morning face ; and in the dining-room downstairs the waitress was the same tired woman who had brought him his breakfast nearly every morning for years. She stopped to talk for a minute or two : somehow Robert McLean could always make her smile, and when she smiled her face became like that of a homely, shy little girl. The freckled kind, so pleased if anyone should notice her.

But when he went out among the crowds he was just a lonely individual, painfully neat, walking to work. From the street, he had occasional distant glimpses of the waterfront, the masts and funnels of the harbour's shipping.

He walked down a street, and across a park, towards the grimy grey loom of the County Building. In a crowd of people he went in through the big bronze doors, into the thronging, echoing marble corridors. As he walked in, he met Tom Garrity. Big and sleek, Tom Garrity was a County Commissioner ; but that didn't mean much. He was the boss—the quiet, clamp-jawed political boss of the City and the County.

Robert McLean said : " Morning, Tom."

Tom Garrity looked at him good-naturedly, and flipped a negligent hand in greeting. " Mm—Bob," he said. Robert walked along to the lifts.

Fifteen minutes later, in Department Six of the Superior Court,

the clerk's gavel thumped perfunctorily, his voice droned rapidly, and there was a rustling in the courtroom as the crowd rose to their feet, because the door of the Judge's chambers had opened and Robert McLean was ascending the bench, to sit in judgment upon disputed solemnities of wealth and of property, or upon the weak, the silly, or the wicked.

He sat there with his quietest fear: that his lost brother Steve would come to light again some day, standing in court like this prisoner, accused of crime. From his silent and compassionate knowledge of human failure, Robert McLean knew that Steve was headed for it, if ever a man was.

Sitting there, while an important bustle at the courtroom doors told him that a new witness was being called in this murder trial, Robert did not raise his eyes. He was looking at a single yellow rosebud which lay on his desk. He knew who had put it there. Once in a while, Marcia did something like this, but only when she knew he was especially troubled. A flower, a package of tobacco, some mornings just a folded piece of paper saying only: Marcia. This rosebud—the money it had cost in some early-opened florist's shop probably meant she had had nothing but coffee for her breakfast.

The witness was being sworn. Standing there below him, a haggardly overdressed woman with hand upraised, she was answering the hurried, ancient, sacredness of the oath in a voice too loud and too confident, yet cracking suddenly, with an awful attempt to swallow. She went up the two steps to the witness box, stumbling once on her nervous high heels and reaching out a swift hand, flashing with a cheap bracelet, to steady herself against the corner of his desk. A defence attorney rose, benign and grave, from the littered counsel table.

Robert McLean looked beyond the witness to the jury. Seven men and five women. They were the kind of people who as neighbours would advise you about your flower-borders, or bring in a new-baked cake towards supper-time; most of them did not feel themselves fitted to decide a human fate. But it was a good jury, they would be painfully fair; and if the law, as laid down by the judge, did not permit them to be kind, they would be troubled for the rest of their lives.

This was the fourth day of a trial for murder in the second degree. The testimony would probably be completed this morning, and the arguments could begin in the afternoon.

The defendant sat at one end of the long table with his two other lawyers. Puzzled, Robert McLean wondered again where the money was coming from for this high-powered defence of a young swindler, who seemed to have blundered into deeper crime.

He was a young man with black hair, wavy and too thick. He sat there modestly, often with a dynamically thoughtful, executive air, scribbling a note which he passed to one of his attorneys, and at calculated intervals throughout the trial he had a lustrous and eloquent glance for the jury. Especially for the women jurors. His brilliant eyes would linger upon them confidingly.

He was accused of killing, more or less by accident and in the yelling scuffle of an unpremeditated quarrel, a woman who had been with him in small-scale swindles around town for more than a year. His name was Kabler.

And Robert, making an occasional note, sometimes felt his fingers stiffen uncontrollably from sheer nerves. The day before yesterday a captain of detectives had come to him, hesitant and gruff. That was how he had found out that his brother Steve was back in town. A pair of detectives had found him late at night, wandering morosely, miserable with drink, and recognizing him as the Judge's brother, had taken him to the address he gave them. A rooming-house hardly better than a doss-house for tramps.

For a moment Robert had wondered why Steve had come back at all, to the city where he had crashed so badly. But the detectives had that answer. Getting talkative-drunk, Steve had told them that he was just back from Alaska, and on his way to South America; he was keeping out of sight until his ship sailed. He begged them not to tell his brother, the Judge. Wistfully, the Judge knew that Steve would not be coming to see him—too fierce a shame was there. Robert understood, though the hurt was deep and silent.

The squalor of this murder trial was nearly over. By half past eleven, the last defence witness, a taxi-driver, had been heard. Abruptly, the State asked for an early adjournment, before beginning arguments in the afternoon. Robert granted it, and got up wearily. Coming down his three steps, while everyone in the standing court-room watched him, he opened the door to his chambers, his hand fumbling ever so little with the familiar knob. He closed the door behind him.

For a long moment, with his robe still on, he stood in that good silence. Then he slung his robe across the back of a chair in a corner, and sat down at his flat-topped desk in his shirt-sleeves. He started writing his monthly cheques. The cheque for Steve's wife and two children, who had gone back to Florida; the cheque to his mother—his hand signed that one with remembering pride; the cheques to the two banks with which he had negotiated Steve's terrible debts after his disappearance. His hand moved methodically, writing the cheques that left him less than a quarter of his

salary to live on. The cheques that kept him and young, lovely, Marcia from being married. In deep and savage human anger he wondered if this would go on forever—or if he would allow it to. He wasn't obliged to continue paying.

The place where they met for lunch was a little restaurant across the park. Marcia was already at their usual table. As he walked towards her, her lips parted slightly, breathlessly, like a child's; and suddenly they were alone, in the midst of crowd and noise.

"The flower you left on my desk," he said. "Instead of having a proper breakfast."

She blushed, so he knew that he was right.

"Some day there will be a gardenful of flowers, round our house," she said. "I won't have to leave things on your desk, I'll probably never even go near your desk, because you'll have everything at home. I think," she said hastily, "that our garden will have a blue gate."

"It's a long time off, the way things look."

"Yes. A long time," she said clearly.

Marcia was only a year and a half out of college, and her salary was so minute that she lived in a tiny cramped room he had never seen, in one of those cheerless endowed hostels which are run more severely than a women's college.

She didn't have many dresses. Today she had on the clothes that he thought he would always remember the best. A short grey jacket with a wide white collar on her shoulders, and white cuffs, a most conservatively-cut skirt and sensible shoes; but a merry little hat dipping over one eye.

"You're beautiful," he said.

"Am I?" She turned up the brim of her hat—with that lovely and characteristic gesture—so she could look at him straight with both eyes. "If I am, it's because I thought about *you* all last night."

"I'd rather believe you were asleep," he said. "A child has no business with the four-o'clock-in-the-morning worries. Leave that to your elderly friend. I'm an expert. I can do plenty of worrying for both of us."

She smiled. She thought that the difference in their ages was about right, but it gave him an occasional wry joke. They didn't have very much to make jokes about. "You. The Happy Worrier," she murmured in a distant voice, watching the waiter coming with their lunch.

"I ordered turkey pie for us and I asked for the recipe to copy into my book. Poor dear, even when everything is beautiful and

happy for us, you'll still have politics and my cooking to keep you thin."

The waiter slid the dishes in front of them on the tablecloth. "That chef," he said. "You would think he is writing a sonnet maybe. He is holding a piece of paper up against the wall, and he is chewing a pencil. My pencil, that he borrowed from me! Phooey! Tomorrow I bring you a good recipe, from my wife." Mopping his sad bald head with a napkin, he flap-footed away.

In sudden forlorn bitterness, Marcia said: "Everybody in the world can be married and have a home, except you and me."

Gently he asked: "What were you thinking last night?"

"Well, when I broke our date, I told you, I had to look into an—an odd sort of case. I had to make a late visit. So when I got back to my room . . ." She sat very still, looking down at her untouched plate. "Oh, Bob, let's skip it. Let's en—" She swallowed, a sort of dry click in her throat. He heard it—"enjoy being together for this hour."

"I don't like your making one of your calls at night. It's dangerous. I hope you took a cop with you?"

Marcia shook her head, smiling faintly. On the strength of an impressive Master's degree, Marcia was a social worker, a case-investigator for the Welfare Department. Her job took her into the dark ways of the city, through tough streets and up greasy, dusty stairs to knock on silent doors.

When they were halfway through their lunch, Tom Garrity came in with three other men. They all nodded to Robert McLean, but while the others went on towards the bar at the back, Tom Garrity stopped at their table.

"Hullo, you two," he said. His pale, heavily smooth face softened ever so little as he stood there staring down at Marcia. "How's your work going, young lady?"

"Oh fine, thank you, Mr. Garrity," she said uncomfortably.

"O.K. Any time I can do anything for you, just come and see me," Garrity said. He laid a big hand on Robert's shoulder for a moment, and then walked into the back room.

This was the one man to whom Robert owed a debt, and he was all too conscious of it. In the blackest time of all, when the uncertainties of a law practice could not steadily carry the family load, old Judge Carson had resigned suddenly in broken health, and Tom Garrity had got Robert appointed for the ten months of the unexpired term. Then in last year's elections Robert had won his seat for himself; but Tom Garrity's amiable weight had helped him there, too.

They were walking back across the park to the courthouse when Marcia asked curiously: "Bob, do you intend to see your brother, now that he's in town again?"

They walked a dozen steps in silence. " I don't suppose Steve would want to see me," Robert said slowly.

" But from what you told me the detectives said—"

" You can only help people up to a certain point. After that, it's up to them," he said miserably. " Maybe I haven't done all I could, but I've done all I could think of. I—I wouldn't shame Steve by going to that place and—what could I say, anyway ? "

But for just a second, with Marcia slim and beautiful beside him, he bitterly resented Steve. Steve and the heart-breaking load which—

As if, not knowing, she yet understood, Marcia touched his hand without looking at him.

They went through a narrow side door of the courthouse, and down some concrete steps to a basement corridor. The welfare office where she worked was at the far end of the corridor, but no one was in sight. They stopped, and stood facing each other, smiling a little, not wanting to say good-bye. He fumbled with his hat, and she was standing very near him with one finger drawing small absent-minded circles around the top buttonhole of his open overcoat. With a quick breath she crooked her finger through the buttonhole and pulled, ever so gently. And was holding her lips up to him.

That simplicity, that moment, remained with him all afternoon. The State, in the dry voice of an assistant prosecuting attorney, began its argument to the jury. All through this trial, even though it was a minor one, Robert had been slightly puzzled that his grim friend Joe Terriss, the prosecuting attorney himself, had not looked in to see how things were going. The State's case needed his touch. This assistant of Joe's, a middle-aged, kindly, harassed man, had missed many points.

The defence had overlooked nothing, and had amassed a list of exceptions to his rulings which he was afraid would look bad to a higher court if the verdict was " Guilty " and there was an appeal. With his hands folded on his desk, Robert listened to the monotonous prosaic voice going on and on. But the depths of his mind were filled with the sweetness of Marcia, and the loneliness of their sleepless nights, far apart. He felt a harsh rebellion constricting his throat.

Unexpectedly, he knew that this was his hour of decision. Whether to go on sacrificing himself and Marcia, or to give in.

With his clear, sad, legal mind, he knew human frailty—recognized his own : inconsistent from moment to moment, torn by contradictions of anger and desire and silent love. He was ready to quit. Desperately, wearily, he needed inward peace. For Marcia's sake, he had a right to his life.

And then, with suddenly clear sight, he was looking at the faces below him in the courtroom. Passing over the accused, the dapper Kabler, he studied one by one the people whom he knew; his court attachés, the lawyers, a couple of newspaper reporters who had drifted in for a brief routine check-up. And from his knowledge of them, his mind began a strange and silent roll-call.

A drawn, tired face, for the defence—that lawyer was looking the world in the eye, trying quietly to rebuild a name which his brilliant and charming father had dragged into bankruptcy. Then, a haughty face, iron with pride. For all his successful law practice, he, too, was facing difficulties alone. His partner, a boyhood friend, had shot himself, and his wife, an extraordinarily beautiful woman, had left him.

Mary Williamson, a journalist with a lovely calm face, had worked for twenty years to educate her son, her dearest companion—just to see them together could bring a surge of happiness. And her son had died in Korea.

Another lawyer's small, ugly, anxious, low-comedy face peered from behind enormously earnest, horn-rimmed spectacles. The size of his family, as against the size of his practice, was a standing joke around the courthouse. Nobody ever knew how he could pay his bills. He rarely had a case of his own; bigger lawyers sometimes retained him as an assistant. But once, McLean had seen one of his little girls looking up at that homely, funny, tired face, and had wished that he himself were a good enough man to merit that some day a child might look at him like that.

These—just these people working in his court today; and when Robert thought, twenty acquaintances around town came to mind . . . a fine surgeon, a bookshop assistant, the man from whom he bought his tobacco—in one way or another, the full load of life was upon them, and they carried it each as best he could, but honourably. He guessed that every family had its trouble, and nearly always there was someone strong enough to bear the burden. At what secret cost, they—only they—knew.

And so, suddenly, with his black robe bunched a little uncomfortably over his shoulders, Robert McLean was sitting in judgment upon himself. Asking himself those simple and most searching questions which sooner or later, in some quiet moment, every human being must ask in the silences of the heart: "Have I really done all that I could, or am I just making things easy for myself? Have I done all that is in me to do, to the uttermost limit of my strength? For nothing less can count. Wanting things for myself, have I given them up without complaining? Sacrifice, talked about, can be the most despicable of all our vanities . . ."

He had made his decision. There could be only one. And Marcia would agree. They would go on, to the last lonely step.

The assistant prosecutor, seeing the Judge's head bowing lower and lower over his clasped hands, hesitated. The Judge lifted his face abruptly, and found himself looking straight into the eyes of the defendant, Kabler. The young man smirked. "Continue," Robert said evenly, and the long rustle and sigh of his crowded courtroom answered him.

A little before three o'clock, a messenger slipped in through the crowd and handed a note to the assistant prosecutor. He read it and immediately looked up to ask for a fifteen minutes' recess. Mildly surprised, the Judge granted it and went into his chambers. The prosecuting attorney, Joe Terriss, was there. Long, lean, grey—and saturnine—he sat with his feet propped up on a window-sill.

Robert lit a pipe, and they talked casually—courthouse gossip. After about ten minutes, Joe Terriss ground out his cigarette stub and got up to go. "That boy you're trying," he said. "Kabler. He's Tom Garrity's nephew."

Robert had just struck a match. Motionless, he let it burn down almost to his fingernails. He blew it out.

"How long have you known that, Joe?" he asked quietly.

"Two months. While the boy was in jail, waiting trial, Tom came and told me—Just thought you'd get a kick out of knowing it. Now that the evidence is all in."

"And instructions to the jury coming up," Robert said.

Joe lifted one shoulder, and strolled out the way he had come, through the back door.

Standing alone beside his office desk, Robert stared at his cheques, still lying there. Tom Garrity was the man to whom he was indebted, for his very job, for his very power. Slowly, a profound dismay filled his mind. This was his chance to repay Tom Garrity all his favours, rolled into one.

His bailiff knocked on the door. He gathered up his robe and went back into the courtroom.

A judge's bench is one of the lonely places of the world. Sitting there, his mind turned blindly to thoughts of Steve. For the first time in many years, he turned to his brother for strength and for bravery. Because Steve had that most lasting gift that a man can be born with—the fighting heart. The laughing heart of courage that never stops until the breath stops. He had shown it as a little boy, and it had flown with him as a troop-carrier pilot in the South Pacific.

The only trouble with Steve was that he had never learned to use it against the unspectacular enemy of every man—the long, dull grind of daily living and daily obligation. Misdirected and

careless, and then angry, it had wrecked him and everyone else in sight. Once when Robert was trying to tell Marcia about his brother, she said, " If only he could use it to fight his way back . . ."

At five o'clock, Robert walked more slowly than ever to the door of his chambers, while the shabby mass of spectators crowded out into the noisy hall and the lawyers started cramming papers into their brief-cases. Switching on the green-shaded lamp on his desk, the Judge got out of his robe and stood for a minute at one of the big windows, looking at the lights of the city coming on in the dusk across the park.

Then he sat down and with his trial notes neatly arranged before him, began drafting the preliminary lines of his instructions to the jury. Instructing the jury was the part of any trial he disliked most. He wrote : *It is now my duty to instruct you, upon the evidence and upon the basis of the testimony which has been heard* . . . He was writing on, painfully, when someone knocked on the back door of his office.

" Come in," Robert called.

The door opened, and from the small empty back corridor Tom Garrity came in.

Robert laid down his pencil. Dully he thought : *So he has come to demand his pound of flesh.*

" Joe Terriss was in," Robert said. " He told me, Tom."

" Oh," Garrity said, with a curious lameness.

The Judge sat looking down at the instructions which he had been writing. Then he said : " Who else knows it ? "

" Nobody. Nobody at police headquarters. Only Joe Terriss, in this building. And the defence lawyers, of course. I'm paying them."

" I wondered why Joe hasn't looked in on the trial."

Garrity said bitterly : " He thought it was a clear-cut case of ' Guilty,' and all he could do was stay out of it personally, and assign a dumb assistant to try the case. I'll remember that." Tom Garrity suddenly made a gesture of such weariness that it was shocking. He dragged his coat-sleeve across his eyes. " I can't expect loyalty," he said. " All I can expect is for them to be afraid."

" Well, *I* can't stay out of it personally, Tom. It's in my court," Robert said. " The defence hasn't been able to shake the State's testimony, only obscure it. That's what I ought to clear up now, in my instructions. Joe was right. It's likely to amount to a verdict of guilty, I think."

Garrity let out a deep breath, as if he had been holding it ; and just stood looking down at the Judge.

In gentleness, Robert said : " Would you like to tell me about it, Tom ? Though I'm afraid it can't do much good."

"I . . . didn't suppose so. I know you. But by God, you're not a weasel, anyway. I'll remember that, too." A match-flame, held to a cigar, wavered pitifully in front of that heavy face. "Listen. I had a sister once, that nobody remembers. I guess when you've—when you've loved somebody you'd better keep your mouth shut or you'll make a fool of yourself. Listen," Tom Garrity said raspingly. "We were kids together. In an orphanage. Know what that means? She was older than me and—she was the only loving face I ever knew."

"Yes, Tom," the Judge said softly.

"We were Irish brats, and nobody ever wanted to adopt us. Know what that means? So we grew up in that place, and then we got out of there. I swore I'd make it all up to her. I swore I was going to whip the world for her and . . . I have." He stood there with a terrible, shining, fixed grin, but looking down at the tip of his cigar. "Margaret died years ago, far away. And nobody remembers. And she left this son."

"What can I do, Tom? You know he's guilty."

"That's up to you. I'm not asking anything." Garrity had a voice hard as gravel, and as loose. "The name he's using, Kabler, is an *alias*. He always was a bad kid—a smart guy. I educated him, as far as he'd go, and kept him away from here, on the other side of the country. A year ago he and this woman, the one he killed, showed up here, in spite of the money I was paying him. They were clever. They got more money out of me by coming here."

Tom Garrity turned away. With his back to the Judge, he said thickly: "Damn you, I'm not asking for anything. I wish I hadn't come here. It was my last chance for . . . for . . . Hell with it! It's only that I haven't slept well, not for a long time. I lie there at night and—I guess my head's all fogged up by now. My wife thinks I'm ill." He started for the door, and reached for it with an odd, groping gesture. "I guess I am," he said.

Leaving the door open he turned again, in the barren light of the back corridor. And with one hand managed an airy, genial, politician's gesture. "See you later, Bob," he said hoarsely.

Waiting for Marcia, Robert picked up his pencil again. And looking at it with a sick feeling, laid it down once more. In this little island of light under his green-shaded lamp he heard the dull roar of the city, with night coming on. In sadness for all men—himself, himself—who with breath inherit anger and wrong and pain, he began writing with a steady hand: *Remembering always the weaknesses which reside in us all, this court must instruct you upon the testimony of the following witnesses for the state. They have given testimony of such exceeding weight that this court must, in conscience, recall to you certain points against the accused . . .*

When he glanced up, Steve was standing in the open doorway. "Well, here I am," Steve said.

Robert sat very still. His pencil rolled away under the lamp.

"I've been waiting out of sight until your chum had left," Steve said. "And then I guess I was afraid to come in, Bob."

Steve had come only a few steps into the room, and stood in the deep shadows. "I just came to tell you that I'm going back," Steve said.

Robert moved his hand in a vague motion, not even questioning.

"It doesn't matter whether you believe me. After all this while." For the first time in Robert's remembrance, Steve was mumbling. But suddenly his voice cleared, and rang straight. "But you'll believe me a year from now. I'm going to find my children again, and pick things up. I mean to pull my own weight in the world. Bob, I've just heard what you've been doing, for me. I'll say thank you when I've paid you back."

"Forget it, forget it, Steve . . . What . . . are you going to do?"

"A job. I'm always good for a job. Swell for my kids, swell for my debts. No more running with a crowd too rich and too fast for me. No more brokerage business for myself, green carpets and big desks, until maybe when I can really cope. Job meanwhile. The—the debts were pretty awful, weren't they, Bob?"

"Not bad. Not too bad. Oh, Steve, I—"

"I ran out. I got mad and rattled and ran out when I crashed. You got that crazy drunk postcard from Ketchikan? I was working on a fishing-boat. There's a life for you, boy! I liked it. Free, and never mind tomorrow." His voice changed again. Timidly. "Cora and I weren't very happy together. But I guess that doesn't matter, does it, Bob?"

Robert thought slowly of the spoiled, careless girl who now would have to "find her way back," too.

"No. It doesn't matter, Steve. But it will come out right, I think," he said.

"Well, that's all Bob. I'll be going. But I'm glad you sent for me."

"Sent for you?" Robert was deeply startled.

"Yeah." Steve was walking towards him, and as he came into the light, his eyes had that far, clear sapphire look of theirs. "Well, here's my hand, Bob," he said. "But why did you send your girl to find me in that place last night? That doss-house. It was horribly dangerous for her."

"My—girl . . .?"

"Nice girl. Marcia. But too pretty and too young to go into a place like that. It's a snake-pit of horrors."

Robert closed his mouth slowly, having the human wisdom to say nothing.

"Her courage," Steve said harshly. "When I—when I see a girl come there through danger because she loves my brother—could I have less courage, of a different sort? I'm going back, Bob."

"All right, kid," Robert said under his breath.

"I haven't got the quietness or the bravery that I saw in your girl last night. I . . . I may still fail, maybe," Steve said.

"Well, I'm here, Steve, if you do. And Marcia."

"A grand girl. You're lucky, Bob," Steve said wistfully. "But I don't want to see her again, just now. Not until I can see you both in my own house. My guests. My turn. I'll be going now, Bob. So long, boy."

Walking quickly, he was gone, while Robert was getting up from his desk, reaching out towards him.

Looking at the empty door, Robert knew that Steve was on his way to join the secret company. He knew what Steve had to learn. Only when the heart is strained to its limit do you know how strong it is; only when you cannot see the next step do you know how far you can carry the load.

And waiting beside his desk, he heard Marcia's swift light steps in the corridor.

* * *

TURKISH DELIGHT

A man-of-war of the old Ottoman navy was once ordered at very short notice to demonstrate against certain insurgents.

"Start in half an hour," said someone at the Ministry of Marine to the Commanding Officer.

"Pardon, Excellency, we cannot."

"Fellow, why not?"

"Excellency, there is no rudder."

"Imbecile, start at once; the rudder shall be sent on by post."

A Turkish Admiral ordered his squadron to proceed on a cruise.

"Where to?" his staff inquired.

"There seems to be plenty of room," replied the Admiral, glancing at the chart; "let us go straight ahead."

They did, and the ships ran ashore on the north coast of Africa.

SIR HARRY LUKE, *Cities and Men, Volume I*

VISION OF DELIGHT

Tell me, my heart, if this be love

GEORGE LYTTELTON

I looked out vaguely over the country road which, outside the studio, passed quite close to it but did not belong to Elstir. Suddenly there appeared on it, coming along it at a rapid pace, the young bicyclist of the little band, with, over her dark hair, her polo-cap pulled down towards her plump cheeks, her eyes merry and almost importunate ; and on that auspicious path, miraculously filled with promise of delights, I saw her beneath the trees throw to Elstir the smiling greeting of a friend, a rainbow that bridged the gulf for me between our terraqueous world and regions which I had hitherto regarded as inaccessible.

She even came up to give her hand to the painter, though without stopping, and I could see that she had a tiny beauty spot on her chin. " Do you know that girl, sir ? " I asked Elstir, realising that he could if he chose make me known to her, could invite us both to the house. And this peaceful studio with its rural horizon was at once filled with a surfeit of delight.

MARCEL PROUST, *Within a Budding Grove*, *translated by* C. K. SCOTT MONCRIEFF

Beyond All Dreams

By day mine eyes, by night my soul desires thee,
Weary, I lie alone.
Once in a dream it seemed thou wert beside me ;
O far beyond all dreams, if thou wouldst come !

MS. of Beauvais, translated by HELEN WADDELL

Serenade

One evening she had gone to fetch water at the well in the plantation grove beyond the cassia. As she returned with the pot on her head, she saw the young man on the path in front of her ; he was looking up at the verandah of her house where she often sat after sunset. His back was towards her, he did not hear her step, and continued to watch the verandah. As soon as she saw him she came to a stop. Though she had never spoken to him at any time, she knew why he had come at sunset to loiter and look into her house.

There was nothing bold or rude in his manner. He was as shy as any of the deer of the hill, half behind a bush, nervous and peeping, his young face timid and anxious. She stood where she was, unable to go on, caught in his mood, in the mood of the hour, of a flushed sky, a drifting scent.

Presently he felt at his waist and drew out a flute. This he fingered awhile, as if uncertain whether to blow it. Then, plucking up spirit, he put it to his lips and sounded an air, plaintive and faint, the serenade of a gentle soul. Had he turned, and found the courage to seize the moment, it is possible that she would have listened to his suit. But he did not turn round and her mood changed. Perhaps it was because he was so mild a little man; perhaps because of her dreams of a great unknown, though as yet she did not connect them with a possible reality. Whatever the cause, she was no longer moved, only charmed as by something half serious. She continued to listen to him playing out the music, his soft eyes fixed on the house.

At last, seeing no sign of her on the verandah, he put his flute again at his waist and with a sigh went away.

MAURICE COLLIS, *The Mystery of Dead Lovers*

O Summer Love

Sometimes I drift where you lie,
As lovely as summer is golden,
And touch your hair that ripples
Silken as harvest in an autumn windstream,
Fugitive as the dreams I've laced with you.

O silken dust, briefer than harvest is yellow,
O summer love, will you still wait for me
When I return in winter?

R. L. COOK, *Within the Tavern Caught*

Heart's Flower

She's the white flower of the blackberry, she's the sweet flower of the raspberry, she's the best herb for beauty for the sight of the eyes.

She's my pulse, she's my secret, she's the sweet flower of the apple, she's summer in the cold time between Christmas and Easter.

Irish folk song
from A Celtic Miscellany by
KENNETH HURLSTONE JACKSON

At Some Distance

We had not walked long, ere, at some distance, I perceived Lord Oryille, who seemed just dismounted from his horse, enter the garden. All my perturbation returned at the sight of him !— yet I endeavoured to repress every feeling but resentment. As he approached us, he bowed to the whole party ; but I turned away my head, to avoid taking any share in his civility. Addressing himself immediately to Mrs. Beaumont, he was beginning to enquire after his sister, but upon seeing my face, he suddenly exclaimed, " Miss Anville ! "—and then he advanced, and made his compliments to me, — not with an air of vanity or impertinence, nor yet with a look of consciousness or shame, — but with a countenance open, manly, and charming ! — with a smile that indicated pleasure, and eyes that sparkled with delight !

With what politeness did he address me ! with what sweetness did he look at me ! the very tone of his voice seemed flattering ! he congratulated himself upon his good fortune in meeting with me, — hoped I should spend some time in Bristol, and enquired, even with anxiety enquired, if my health was the cause of my journey, in which case his satisfaction would be converted into apprehension.

Yet, struck as I was with his manner, and charmed to find him such as he was wont to be, imagine not, my dear Sir, that I forgot the resentment I owe him, or the cause he has given me of displeasure ; no, my behaviour was such as, I hope, had you seen, you would not have disapproved : I was grave and distant, I scarce looked at him when he spoke, or answered him when he was silent.

FRANCES BURNEY, *Evelina*

Hidden Wings

Your eyes are the home of sunlight ;
your heart beats hidden wings.
In the slow music of your voice
a green island sings.

You move in a cloud of seasons ;
your love unfolds like a rose.
Into my bowl of starlight
your wine of darkness flows

till we, in a rippling silence,
back into time are hurled —
down through a turquoise shoal of stars
to the dream haze of the world.

EDMUND COOPER

Famous Novels in Outline

ROMOLA

Passion and Intrigue in Renaissance Italy

by GEORGE ELIOT

Marian Evans, better known as George Eliot, visited Florence in 1860 *and* 1861 *to collect material for this stirring historical romance set in the days of Savonarola and Lorenzo de' Medici. The moving adventures of her heroine, the beautiful and fearless Romola, were first serialized in the Cornhill Magazine in* 1862–1863.

★

TITO MELEMA arrives in Florence penniless and unknown, but the sale of some rare jewels in his possession soon brings him into the circle of the wealthy, learned men of the city, among them the blind antiquarian, Bardo.

Bardo is a great scholar who has continued his annotations of Greek and Roman books through the eyes of his beautiful daughter, Romola. His only interest in life is his library and museum, and he has brought up his daughter in innocence of the outside world.

Bardo accepts Tito eagerly, for he is always eager to meet a scholar and a man who has travelled much. He also tells Tito of a son whom he has lost.

Tito's fortune has at last come to him with the sale of all his jewels except a single ring. He recalls that the money properly belongs to Baldassarre Calvo, the man who has been almost a father to him, the man who may now be a slave in the hands of the Turks.

If Baldassarre were really alive, Tito tells himself, he would spend the money for the old man's ransom. But he is not sure his foster-father still lives.

Quickly Tito entrenches himself in the learned society of Florence. At the yearly festival of San Giovanni, patron saint of Florence, Tito, while sitting at a window with a friend, fancies that he sees in the crowd below a monk who gazes upon him with a malevolent glance.

Also glancing up at Tito from below is the beautiful Tessa, daughter of a milk vendor, whom Tito met on the day of his arrival

in Florence.

Later, as he walks through the crowded streets, he rescues Tessa from some jostling revellers. When he has left her, he meets the strange monk who gazed at him from the crowd earlier in the afternoon.

The monk, Fra Luca, gives him a note that has been brought from a pilgrim in the Near East. The note is from Baldassare, who pleads that Tito should rescue him from slavery. Tito wonders what is so familiar about the monk's face.

Attracted by the lovely, grave Romola, Tito spends many hours reading and writing manuscripts with her blind father. One day, when Tito has the opportunity to be alone with Romola for a brief moment, he declares his love to her, and Romola shyly confesses her love for him.

That same day Monna Brigida pays a call on her cousin Bardo. When she accidentally mentions the name of a Dominican monk, Dino, Tito discovers that the lost son of Bardo is not dead, but banished from his father's house.

Realizing that Fra Luca is Dino, Tito fears exposure of his benefactor's slavery. He feels the time ripe for asking the old man for permission to marry Romola. Bardo readily consents.

Tito learns that Fra Luca is dangerously ill at Fiesole. One evening Romola tells him that her dying brother has sent for her. Tito fears that Fra Luca will tell her the story that Tito had hoped would die with him.

In despair, he wanders through the city and chances to meet Tessa. In a ribald ceremony, which amuses the gaping crowd, Tito allows Tessa to believe that he has really married her. Unwilling to undeceive her, he makes her promise to keep the marriage a secret.

Dino dies without revealing to Romola the story of Baldassarre and the ungrateful Tito. Tito and Romola are married.

Bardo dies, leaving Romola to carry on his scholarly work. Meanwhile political events in Florence help to advance Tito's fortunes; he becomes an interpreter in negotiations with the French.

On the day the French king arrives in the city, the soldiers lead through the streets a group of prisoners who beg their ransoms from the Florentines. The mocking mob cut an old man loose from his fetters and allow him to escape into the crowd.

The prisoner runs blindly into Tito, who is standing with a group of dignitaries on the steps of San Marco. Tito turns and finds himself looking into the face of Baldassarre Calvo, who then disappears into the crowd.

Fearing Baldassarre's revenge, Tito buys a coat of mail to wear under his clothes as a defence against the thrust of a knife. Tito begs Romola to sell her father's library and leave Florence with him. When Romola refuses, he secretly sells the library and the antiquities it contains.

In his search for a place to stay, Baldassarre comes by chance to the house where Tessa and her children by Tito live with a deaf old peasant woman. The woman gives the old man permission to sleep in the loft.

Tessa eagerly confides in Baldassarre. Tito had not abandoned her after their mock-marriage. At first he had been too flattered by her innocent admiration to tell her they were not man and wife. Instead, he sent her to live with the old peasant woman, whom he pays well for the care she gives Tessa and his children, and he has sworn the two women to secrecy.

While Baldassarre lies in the hayloft, Tito comes to see Tessa. Suspecting from her description the identity of the old man, Tito goes to his foster-father to ask his forgiveness. He has decided that Baldassarre shall come to live with him and share his comfort. But the old man does not forgive. He threatens to expose Tito and ruin him.

At a dinner in Florence, Baldassarre appears to denounce Tito before his political friends. The trembling old man is pronounced mad and sent to prison. During a plague the gaols are emptied to make room for the sick, and Baldassarre is released.

He spies upon Tito until he learns that the youth has two wives, one noble and brave, the other timid and stupid. He approaches Romola to expose Tito.

When she learns of Tito's betrayal, Romola is able to piece together all the suspicions she has had about her husband, his long absences from home, his strange moods, and his secret fears.

One day she finds little Lillo, Tessa's son, wandering lost in the streets. She takes the child to his home, and there she realizes that she has discovered Tito's Tessa.

The final blow comes to Romola when her godfather, Bernardo del Nero, the only person in the world she still loves, is arrested.

The Medici have been plotting to return to Florence, and Bernardo is a member of the committee that has contrived their return. Romola knows Tito has been a spy for both political factions ; he has gained his own safety by betraying others.

Romola reveals to Tito her knowledge of Baldassarre's story and the truth of the old man's accusation against him. Then, disillusioned and sorrowful at the execution of Bernardo, she flees from Florence.

Tito also plans to flee from Florence; for his double-dealings have been discovered. A mob follows him out of the city. To escape his pursuers, he throws away his purse, and while the crowd scramble for it, he jumps into the river.

Weakly he pulls himself ashore on the opposite side. There Baldassarre, now a starving beggar, finds him. In a final effort the old man throws himself on his exhausted enemy and strangles him.

Romola returns to Florence to learn of her husband's murder at the hands of an old man who had long been his enemy. Romola understands the justice of Tito's violent end. She finds Tessa and the children and brings them to live with her. Hers is the one good deed that results from Tito's false and guilty life.

* * *

WHEN KNIGHTS WERE BOLD . . .

Knights chivalrous and frivolous—how many can you recognize in this gallant procession? Allow yourself one point for identifying the character, one for the work of fiction in which he appears and one for the author, making a possible total of twenty-four. The answers are on page 71.

1. *Returning from the Crusades in disguise, he entered the lists with the word "Disinherited" on his shield, vanquished his opponents and named the lady of his choice Queen of Love and Beauty.*
2. *"And from his blazon'd baldric slung*
   A mighty silver bugle hung
   And as he rode his armour rung . . ."
3. *He was dressed in rather badly fitting armour, and across his shoulders was a little box—his own invention—for keeping sandwiches in.*
4. *Temperamentally highly unsuited to his vocation, and hampered by his visor, he doggedly pursued the Beast Glatisant for seventeen years.*
5. *He was a verray parfit gentil knight.*
6. *Dreaming of romance and chivalry, this elderly gentleman, riding a broken-down horse and accompanied by a faithful servant, set off on a fantastic quest.*
7. *As fat as butter, inordinately fond of drinking, but excellent company, he truly said of himself, "Banish plump – and banish all the world."*
8. *Sper-lash! Sper-losh! He kicked the villagers in the pond or blipped them on the head with his battle-axe.*

MEADOW OF THE WORLD

You shoot a man in New York and he drops dead in Athens

by RAY BRADBURY

A WALL collapses, followed by another and another; with dull thunder, a city falls into ruin.

The night wind blows.

The world lies silent.

London was torn down during the day. Port Said was destroyed. The nails were pulled out of San Francisco. Glasgow is no more.

They are gone, for ever.

Boards clatter softly in the wind, sand whines and trickles in small storms upon the still air.

Along the road towards the colourless ruins, comes the old night watchman to unlock the gate in the high barbed-wire fence and stand looking in.

There in the moonlight lie Alexandria and Moscow and New York. There in the moonlight lie Johannesburg and Dublin and Stockholm. And Clearwater, Kansas, and Provincetown, and Rio de Janeiro.

Just this morning the old man saw it happen, saw the car roaring outside the barbed-wire fence, saw the lean, suntanned men in that car, the men with their luxurious charcoal-flannel suits, and winking gold-mask cuff-links, and their burning-gold wrist-watches, and eye-blinding rings, lighting their cork-tipped cigarettes with engraved lighters . . .

"There it is, gentlemen. What a mess! Look what the weather's done to it."

"Yes, sir, it's bad, Mr. Douglas!"

"We just might save Paris."

"Yes, *sir*!"

"But, hell! The rain's warped it. That's Hollywood for you! Tear it down! Clear it out! We can use that land. Send a wrecking crew in today!"

"Yes, *sir*, Mr. Douglas!"

The car roaring off and gone away.

And now it is night. And the old night watchman stands inside the gate.

He remembers what happened this same still afternoon when the wreckers came.

A hammering, ripping, clattering; a collapse, and a roar. Dust and thunder, thunder and dust! And the whole of the entire world shook loose its nails and lath and plaster and sill and celluloid window as town after town after town banged over flat and lay still.

A shuddering, a thunder fading away, and then, once more, only the quiet wind.

The night watchman now walks slowly forward along the empty streets.

And one moment he is in Baghdad, and beggars loll in wondrous filth, and women with clear sapphire eyes give veiled smiles from high thin windows.

The wind blows sand and confetti.

The women and beggars vanish.

And it is all strutworks again, it is all papier mâché and oil-painted canvas and props lettered with the name of this studio, and there is nothing behind any of the building fronts but night and space and stars.

The old man pulls a hammer and a few long nails from his toolbox; he peers around in the junk until he finds a dozen good strong boards and some untorn canvas. And he takes the bright steel nails in his blunt fingers, and they are single-headed nails.

And he begins to put London back together again, hammering and hammering, board by board, wall by wall, window by window, hammering, hammering, louder, louder, steel on steel, steel in wood, wood against sky, working the hours towards midnight, with no end to his striking and fixing and striking again.

"Hey there, you!"

The old man pauses.

"You, night watchman!"

Out of the shadows hurries a stranger in overalls, calling: "Hey, what's-your-name!"

The old man turns. "The name's Smith."

"O.K., Smith, what's the idea?"

The watchman eyes the stranger quietly. "Who are *you*?"

"Kelly. Foreman of the wrecking gang."

The old man nods. "Ah. The ones who tear everything down. You've done plenty today. Why aren't you home, bragging about it?"

Kelly hawks and spits. "There was some machinery over on the Singapore set I had to check." He wipes his mouth . . . "Now, Smith, what in heaven's name you think you're doing? Drop that

hammer. You're building it all up again! We tear it down and you put it up. You *crazy*?"

The old man nods. "Maybe I am. But somebody has to put it up again."

"Look, Smith. I do my work, you do yours, everyone's happy. But I can't have you messing, see? I'm reporting you to Mr. Douglas."

The old man goes on with his hammering. "Call him up. Send him round. I want to talk to him. *He's* the crazy one."

Kelly laughs. "You kidding? Douglas don't see nobody." He jerks his hand, then bends to examine Smith's newly-finished work. "Hey, wait a minute! What kind of nails you using? Single-heads! Now; *cut that*! It'll be hell to pay tomorrow, trying to pull 'em out."

Smith turns his head and looks for a moment at the other man swaying there. "Well, it stands to reason you can't put the world together with double-headed nails. They're too easy to yank out. You got to use single-headed nails and hammer 'em way in. Like this!"

He gives a steel nail one tremendous blow that buries it completely in the wood. Kelly works his hands on his hips. "I'll give you one more chance. Quit putting things back together, and I'll play ball with you."

"Young man," says the night watchman, and keeps on hammering while he talks, and thinks about it, and talks some more, "I was here long before you were born. I was here when all this—was only a meadow. And there was a wind set the meadow running in waves. For more than thirty years I watched it grow, until it was all of the world together. I lived here *with* it. I lived nice. This is the *real* world to me now.

"That world out there, beyond the fence, is where I spend time sleeping. I got a little room on a little street, and I see headlines and read about wars and strange, bad people. But here—here I have the whole world together and it's all peace. I been walking through the cities of *this* world since 1920.

"Any night I feel like it, I have a one-o'clock snack at a bar on the Champs Elysées! I can get me some fine Amontillado sherry at a café in Madrid, if I want. Or else me and the stone gargoyles, high up there—you see them on Notre Dame?—we can turn over great state matters, and reach big political decisions!"

"Yeah, sure." Kelly waves impatiently.

"And now you come and kick it down and leave only that world out there which hasn't learned the *first thing* about peace that I know from seeing this land here inside the barbed wire. And so you come and rip it up and there's no peace any more, anywhere. You

and your wreckers, so proud of your wrecking. Pulling down towns and cities and whole lands ! "

" A guy's got to live," says Kelly. " I got a wife and kids."

" That's what they all say. They got wives and kids. And they go on, pulling apart, tearing down, killing. They had *orders* ! Somebody *told* them ! They *had* to do it ! "

" Shut up and gimme that hammer ! "

" Don't come any closer ! "

" Why, you crazy old—"

" This hammer's good for more than nails ! " The old man whistles the hammer through the air, the wrecker jumps back.

" Hell," says Kelly, " you're insane ! I'm putting a call through to the main studio ; we'll get some cops here quick. One minute you're building things up and talking crazy—how do I know two minutes from now you won't run wild and start pouring kerosene and lighting matches ? "

" I wouldn't harm the smallest piece of kindling in this place, and you know it," says the old man.

" Might burn the whole goddam place down," says Kelly. " Listen, old man, you just wait right *there* ! "

The wrecker spins about and runs off into the villages and the ruined cities and the sleeping two-dimensional towns of this night world, and after his footsteps fade there is a music that the wind plays on the long silver barbed wires of the fence, and the old man hammering and hammering and selecting long boards and rearing walls until a time finally comes when his mouth is gasping, his heart is exploding ; the hammer drops from his open fingers, steel nails tinkle like coins on the pavement, and the old man cries out to himself alone : " It's no use, no use. I can't put it all back up before they come. I need so very much help I don't know what to do."

The old man leaves his hammer lying on the road and begins to walk with no direction, with no purpose, it seems, save that he is thinking to make one last round and take one last look at everything and say good-bye to whatever there is or was in this world to say good-bye to.

And so he walks with the shadows all around and the shadows all through this land where time has grown late indeed and the shadows are of all kinds and types and sizes, shadows of buildings, and shadows of people. And he doesn't look straight *at* them, no, because if he looked at them straight, they would all blow away. No, he just walks, down the middle of Piccadilly . . . the echo of his steps . . . or the rue de la Paix . . . the sound of him clearing his throat . . . or Fifth Avenue . . . and he doesn't look right or left. And all around him, in dark doorways and empty windows are his many friends, his good friends, his *very* good friends.

Far away, there is the hiss and steam and soft whispering of a *caffè espresso* machine, all silver and chrome; and soft Italian singing . . . the flutter of hands in darkness over the open mouths of balalaikas, the rustle of palm trees, a touching of drums with the chimes chiming and small bells belling, and a sound of summer apples dropped in soft night grass, which are not apples at all but the motion of women's bared feet slowly dancing a circle to the chimes' faint chiming and the belling of the tiny golden bells.

There is the munch of maize-kernels crushed on black volcanic stone, the sizzle of *tortillas* drowned in hot fat, the whisk of charcoals tossing up a thousand fireflies of spark at the blowing of a mouth, everywhere faces and forms, everywhere stirs and gestures and ghost fires which float the magical torch-coloured faces of Spanish gypsies in air as on a fiery water, the mouths crying out the songs that tell of the oddness and the strangeness and the sadness of living. Everywhere shadows and people, everywhere people and shadows and singing to music.

Just that very trite thing—the wind?

No. The people are all here. They have been here for many years. And tomorrow?

The old man stops, presses his hands to his chest.

They will not be here any more.

A horn blows.

Outside the barbed-wire gate—the enemy! Outside the gate a small black police car, and a large black limousine from the Studio itself, three miles away.

The horn blares.

The watchman stands, transfixed. He looks to left and right.

The horn blares.

The old man seizes the rungs of a ladder and climbs, the sound of the horn pushing him higher and higher. The gate crashes wide, the enemy roars in.

"There he goes!"

The glaring lights of the police shine in upon the cities of the meadow, the lights reveal the stark canvas set-pieces of Manhattan, Chicago, and Chungking! The light glitters on the imitation stone towers of Notre Dame Cathedral, fixes on a tiny figure balancing along the cat-walks of Notre Dame, climbing and climbing up where the night and the stars are turning slowly by.

"There he is, Mr. Douglas, at the top!"

"Good God. It's getting so a man can't spend an evening at a quiet party without—"

"He's striking a match! Call the fire department!"

On top of Notre Dame, the night watchman, looking down,

shielding the match from the softly blowing wind, sees the police, the workmen, and the producer in a dark suit, a big man, gazing up at him. Then the night watchman slowly turns the match, cupping it, applies it to the tip of his cigar. He lights the cigar in slow puffs.

He calls: "Is Mr. Douglas down there?"

A voice calls back: "What do you want with me?"

The old man smiles. "Come up, alone! Bring a gun if you want. I just want a little talk."

The voices echo in the vast churchyard: "Don't *do* it, Mr. Douglas!"

"Give me your gun. Let's get this over with so I can get back to the party. Keep me covered, I'll play it safe. I don't want these sets burnt. There's two million dollars in lumber alone, here. Ready? I'm on my way."

The producer climbs high on the night ladders, up through the half-shell of Notre Dame to where the old man leans against a plaster gargoyle quietly smoking a cigar. The producer stops, gun pointed, half through an open trapdoor.

"All right, Smith. Stay where you are."

Smith removes the cigar from his mouth quietly. "Don't you be afraid of me. I'm all right."

"I wouldn't bet money on that."

"Mr. Douglas," says the night watchman, "did you ever read that story about the man who travelled to the future and found everyone there insane? *Everyone*. But since they were all insane they didn't know they were insane. They all acted alike, and so they thought themselves normal. And since our hero was the only sane one among them, he was abnormal; therefore *he* was the insane one. To them, at least. Yes, Mr. Douglas, insanity is relative. It all depends on who has whom locked in that cage."

The producer swears under his breath. "I didn't climb up here to talk all night. What do you want?"

"I want to talk with 'The Creator.' That's you, Mr. Douglas. You created all this. You came here one day and struck the earth with a magical cheque-book and cried, 'Let there be Paris!' And there *was* Paris: streets, bistros, flowers, wine, bookstalls and all.

"And you clapped your hands again: 'Let there be Constantinople!' And there *it* was! You clapped your hands a thousand times, and each time made something new, and now you think just by clapping your hands one last time, you can drop it all down in ruins. But, Mr. Douglas, it's not as easy as that!"

"I own fifty-one per cent of the stock in this Studio!"

"But did the Studio ever *belong* to you, really? Did you ever think to drive here late some night and climb up on this cathedral and see what a *wonderful* world you created? Did you ever wonder

if it might not be a good idea for you to sit up here with me and my friends and have a cup of Amontillado sherry with us ? All right—so the Amontillado smells and looks and tastes like coffee. Imagination, Mr. Creator, imagination.

" But no, you never came around, you never climbed up, you never looked or listened or cared. There was always a party somewhere else. And now, very late, without asking us, you want to destroy it all. You may own fifty-one per cent of the Studio stock, but you don't own *them*."

" Them ! " cries the producer. " What's all this business about *them* ? "

" It's hard to put in words. These people who *live* here." The night watchman moves his hand in the empty air towards the half-cities and the night. " So many films were made here, in all the long years. Extras moved in the streets in costumes, they talked a thousand tongues, they smoked cigarettes and meerschaums and Persian hookahs, even.

" Dancing girls danced. They glittered, oh, how they glittered ! Women with veils smiled down from high balconies. Soldiers marched. Children played. Knights in silver armour fought. There were orange-tea shops. People sipped tea in them and dropped their h's. Gongs were beaten. Viking ships sailed the inland seas."

The producer lifts himself up through the trapdoor and sits on the planking, the gun cradled more easily in his hand. He seems to be looking at the old man first with one eye, then the other, listening to him with one ear, then the other, shaking his head a little to himself.

The night watchman continues : " And, somehow, after the extras and the men with the cameras and microphones and all the equipment walked away and the gates were shut and they drove off in big cars, somehow something of all those thousands of different people remained.

" The things they had been, or *pretended* to be, stayed on. The foreign languages, the costumes, the things they did, the things they thought about, their religions and their music, all those little things and big things stayed on. The sights of far places. The smells. The salt wind. The sea. It's all here tonight—if you *listen*."

The producer listens and the old man listens in the draughty strutworks of the cathedral, with the moonlight blinding the eyes of the plaster gargoyles and the false stone mouths whispering in the wind ; and the sound of a thousand lands within a land below, blowing and dusting and leaning in that wind, a thousand yellow minarets and milk-white towers and green avenues yet untouched among the hundred new ruins, and all of it murmuring its wires and

lathings like a great steel and wooden harp touched in the night, and the wind bringing that self-made sound high up here in the sky to these two men who stand listening and apart.

The producer laughs shortly and shakes his head.

" You *heard*," says the night watchman. " You *did* hear, didn't you ? I see it in your face."

Douglas shoves the gun in his coat-pocket. " Anything you listen for you can hear. I made the mistake of listening. You should have been a writer. You could throw six of my best ones out of work. Well, what about it—are you ready to come down out of here now ? "

" You sound almost polite," says the night watchman.

" Don't know why I should. You ruined a good evening for me."

" Did I ? It hasn't been that bad, has it ? A bit different, I should say. Stimulating, maybe."

Douglas laughs quietly. " You're not dangerous at all. You just need company. It's your job and everything going to hell and you're lonely. I can't quite understand you, though."

" Don't tell me I've got you thinking ? " asked the old man.

Douglas snorts. " After you've lived in Hollywood long enough, you meet all kinds. Besides, I've never been up here before. It's a real view, like you say. But I'll be damned if I can make out why you should worry about all this junk. What's it to you ? "

The night watchman gets down on one knee and taps one hand into the palm of the other, illustrating his points. " Look. As I said before, you came here years ago, clapped your hands, and three hundred cities jumped up ! Then you added a half-thousand other nations and states and peoples and religious and political set-ups inside the barbed-wire fence. And there was trouble !

" Oh, nothing you could *see*. It was all in the wind and the spaces between. But it was the same kind of trouble the world out there beyond the fence has—squabbles and riots and invisible wars. But at last the trouble died out. You want to know why ? "

" If I didn't, I wouldn't be sitting up here freezing."

A little night music, please, thinks the old man, and moves his hand on the air like someone playing the proper and beautiful background-music to all that he has to tell . . .

" Because you got Boston joined to Trinidad," he says, softly, " part of Trinidad poking out of Lisbon, part of Lisbon leaning on Alexandria, Alexandria tacked on to Shanghai, and a lot of little pegs and nails between, like Chattanooga, Oshkosh, Oslo, Sweet Water, Soissons, Beirut, Bombay, and Port Arthur.

" You shoot a man in New York and he stumbles forward and drops dead in Athens. You take a political bribe in Chicago and

somebody in London goes to jail. You push a knife into a man's stomach in Berlin and it comes out the back of a farmer in Memphis. It's all so *close*, so very *close*. That's why we have peace here.

" We're all so crowded there *has got to be peace*, or nothing would be left ! One fire would destroy all of us, no matter who started it, for what reason. So all of the people, the memories, whatever you want to call them, that are here, have settled down, and this is their world, a good world, a fine world."

The old man stops and licks his lips slowly and takes a breath. " And tomorrow," he says, " you're going to pull it all down."

The old man crouches there a moment longer, then gets to his feet and gazes out at the cities and the thousand shadows in those cities. The great plaster cathedral whines and sways in the night air, back and forth, rocking on the summer tides.

" Well," says Douglas at last, " shall—shall we go down now ? "

Smith nods. " I've had my say."

Douglas vanishes, and the watchman listens to the younger man going down and down through the ladders and cat-walks of the night. Then, after a reasonable hesitation, the old man takes hold of the ladder, breathes something to himself, and begins the long descent in shadow.

The Studio police and the few workers, and some minor executives all drive away. Only one large dark car waits outside the barbed-wire gate as the two men stand talking in the cities of the meadow.

" What are you going to do now ? " asks Smith.

" Go back to my party, I suppose," says the producer.

" Will it be fun ? "

" Yes." The producer hesitates. " Sure, it'll be fun ! ". He glances at the night watchman's right hand. " Don't tell me you've found that hammer Kelly told me you were using ? You going to start building again ? You don't give up, do you ? "

" Would you, if you were the last builder and everybody else was a wrecker ? "

Douglas starts to walk with the old man. " Well, maybe I'll see you again, Smith."

" No," says Smith, " I won't be here. All this won't be here. If you come back again, it'll be too late."

Douglas stops. " Hell ! What do you want me to *do* ? "

" A simple thing. Leave all this standing. Leave these cities up."

" I can't do that ! Damn it. Business reasons. It has to go."

" A man with a real nose for business and *some* imagination, could think up a profitable reason for it to stay," says Smith.

"My car's waiting! How do I get out of here?"

The producer strikes off over a patch of rubble, cuts through half a tumbled ruin, kicking boards aside, leaning for a moment on plaster façades and strutworks. Dust rains from the sky.

"Watch out!"

The producer stumbles in a thunder of dust and avalanching brick, he gropes, he topples, he is seized upon by the old man and yanked forward.

"Jump!"

They jump and half the building slides to ruin, crashes into hills and mountains of old paper and lathing. A great bloom of dust strikes out upon the air.

"You all right?"

"Yes, thanks. Thanks." The producer looks at the fallen building. The dust clears. "You probably saved my life."

"Hardly that. Most of those are papier-mâché bricks. You might have been cut and bruised a little."

"Nevertheless, thanks. What building was that that fell?"

"Norman village tower, built in 1925. Don't get near the rest of it; it might go down."

"I'll be careful." The producer moves carefully in to stand by the set-piece. "Why—I could push this whole damn building over with one hand." He demonstrates, the building leans and quivers and groans. The producer steps quickly back. "I could knock it down in a second," he says.

"But you wouldn't want to do that," says the watchman.

"Oh, wouldn't I? What's one French house more or less, this late in the day?"

The old man takes his arm. "Walk around here to the other side of the house."

They walk to the other side.

"Read that sign," says Smith.

The producer flicks his cigarette lighter, holds the fire up to help him squint and reads: "THE FIRST NATIONAL BANK, MELLIN TOWN." He pauses.

The building stands there in the sharp light of the stars and the bland light of the moon.

"On one side—" Douglas balances his hand like a scales— "—a French tower. On the other side—" He walks seven steps to the right, seven steps to the left, peering—"THE FIRST NATIONAL BANK. Bank. Tower. Tower. Bank. Well, I'll be *damned*."

Smith smiles and says, "Still want to push the French tower down, Mr. Douglas?"

"Wait a minute, wait a minute, hold on, hold on," says Douglas, and suddenly begins to *see* the buildings that stand before him. He

turns in a slow circle, his eyes move up and down and across and over, his eyes flick here, flick there, see this, see that, examine, file, put away, and re-examine.

He begins to walk in silence. They move in the cities of the meadow, over grasses and wildflowers, up to and into and through ruins and half-ruins, and up to and into and through complete avenues and villages and towns.

They begin a recital which goes on and on, as they walk, Douglas asking, the night watchman answering, Douglas asking, the night watchman answering.

"What's this over here?"

"A Buddhist temple."

"And on the other side of it?"

"The farm where Lincoln was born."

"And here?"

"St. Patrick's Church, New York."

"And on the reverse?"

"A Russian Orthodox church in Rostov!"

"What's *this*?"

"The door of a castle on the Rhine!"

"And *inside*?"

"A Kansas City soda fountain!"

"And here? And here? And over *there*? And what's *that*?" says Douglas. "What's this? What about that one? And over there?"

It seems as if they are running and rushing and yelling all through the cities, here, there, everywhere, up, down, in, out, climbing, descending, poking, stirring, opening, shutting doors.

"And this, and this, and this, and *this*!"

The night watchman tells all there is to tell.

Their shadows run ahead in narrow alleys, and avenues as broad as rivers made of stone and sand. They make a great talking circle, they hurry all around and back to where they started.

They are quiet again. The old man is quiet from having said what there was to say, and the producer is quiet from listening and remembering and fitting it all together in his mind. He stands, absent-mindedly fumbling for his cigarette-case. It takes him a full minute to open it, examining every action, thinking about it, and to offer the case to the watchman.

"Thanks." They light up, thoughtfully. They puff on their cigarettes and watch the smoke blow away.

Douglas says, "Where's that damned hammer of yours?"

"Here," says Smith.

"You got your nails with you?"

"Yes, sir." Douglas takes a deep pull on his cigarette and exhales. "O.K., Smith, get to work."

" What ? "

" You heard me. Nail what you can back up, on your own time. Most of the stuff that's already torn down is a complete loss. But any bits and pieces that fit and will look decent, put 'em together. There's a lot still standing. It took me a long time to get it through my head. A man with a nose for business and *some* imagination, you said. This *is* the world, you said.

" I should have seen it years ago. Here it all is inside the fence, and me too blind to see what could be done with it. The World Federation in my own backyard and me kicking it over. So help me, God, we need more crazy people and night watchmen in the world."

" You know," says the night watchman, " I'm getting old and I'm getting strange. You wouldn't be fooling an old and a strange man, would you ? "

" I'll make no promises I can't keep," says the producer. " I'll only promise to try. There's a good chance we can go ahead. It would make a beautiful film, there's no doubt of that. We could make it all here, inside the fence, photograph it ten ways from Christmas. There's no doubt about a story, either. You provided it. It's yours. It wouldn't be hard to put some writers to work on it. Good writers.

" Perhaps only a short subject, twenty minutes, but we could show all the cities and countries here, leaning on and holding each other up. I *like* the idea. I like it very much, believe me. We could show a film like that to anyone anywhere in the world and they'd like it. They couldn't pass it over, it would be too important."

" It's good to hear you talk this way."

" I hope I keep on talking this way," says the producer. " I can't be trusted. I don't trust myself. I get excited, up one day, down the next. Maybe you'll have to hit me on the head with that hammer to keep me going."

" I'd be pleased," says Smith.

" And *if* we do the film," says the younger man, " I suppose you could help. You know the sets, probably better than anyone. Any suggestions you might want to make, we'd be glad to have. Then, after we do the film, I suppose you won't mind letting us tear the rest of the world down, right ? "

" I'd give my permission," says the watchman.

" Well, I'll call off the hounds for a few days, and see what happens. Send out a camera crew tomorrow to see what we can line up for shots. Send out some writers. Maybe you can *all* gab. We'll work it out." Douglas turns towards the gate. " In the meantime, use your hammer all you want. I'll be seeing you."

They hurry towards the gate. On the way, the old man finds his lunch-box where he abandoned it some hours ago. He picks it up,

takes out the thermos, and shakes it.

"How about a drink before you go?"

"What've you got? Some of that Amontillado you were yelling about?"

The thermos is opened and the liquid poured steaming from it into the cup. "There you are," says the old man.

"Thanks. Here's to you." The producer drinks. "That's good. Ah, that's damned good!"

"It might taste like coffee, but I tell you it's the finest Amontillado ever put under a cork."

"You can say *that* again."

The two of them stand among the cities of the world in the moonlight, drinking the hot drink, and the old man remembers something. "There's an old song fits here, a drinking song, I think, a song that all of us who live inside the fence sing, when we're of a mind, when I listen right, and the wind's just right in the telephone and electric wires. It goes like this—

We all go the same way home,
All the same collection, in the same direction,
All go the same way home.
So there's no need to part at all,
And we'll all cling together like the ivy on the old garden wall . . ."

They finish drinking the coffee in the middle of Port-au-Prince.

"Hey!" says the producer, suddenly. "Take it easy with that cigarette! You want to burn down the whole darn *world*?"

They both look at the cigarette and smile.

"I'll be careful," says Smith.

"So long," says the producer. "I'm *really* late for that party."

"So long, Mr. Douglas." The gate-hasp clicks open and shut, the footsteps die away, the limousine starts up and drives off in the moonlight, leaving behind the cities of the world, and an old man standing in the middle of these cities of the world, raising his hand to wave.

"So long," says the night watchman.

And then there is only the wind.

* * *

OFFICIAL REMINDER!

The late Sir Henry Wood walked through Knightsbridge with a friend and paused outside a fishmonger's. He glanced at the rows of cod's heads and said, "My God! I should be at the Albert Hall!"

Gilbert Harding's Treasury of Insult

PERSONABLE CATS

O lovely Pussy! O Pussy, my love,
What a beautiful Pussy you are!

EDWARD LEAR

"Oh, do look at that pretty flower in the window!"

"Yes, I see, it's a little white poppy."

"I'm not talking about the little poppies. I mean the flower at the base of the window, with light and dark mottlings and big white pointed stamens, a velvety flower with two drops of dew shining on it. Well I never, I'm mistaken! It isn't a flower, it's a cat."

"No, poet, you were quite right. It is a flower."

COLETTE, *Creatures Great and Small*

Court Favourite

A delightful animal is the Cat-in-Waiting on the Mikado.
She is a favourite with His Highness and has many titles :
He has conferred upon her the fifth rank of nobility,
And has ordered her called Miyobu-no-Otodo,
Chief Superintendent of the Female Attendants of the Palace.
For all that, she will *go out on the bridge and sleep in full view*
in the sunlight,
However loudly the attendant in charge of her may call :
"Oh, improper! Come in at once!"

ELIZABETH COATSWORTH, *Fox Footprints*

Cats Couchant

The building is a craggy rambling mass . . . the cats in their idle hours wander and drape themselves over all its levels and sketchy escarpments and juttings, all the way to the top—unhurried, unchased, wonderfully at home and regal in all their motions, not having to play up to anybody.

In a little window at the very top, opening on to nothing, a cat framed in vines lies like a princess drying her hair ; another is oddly reclined below on a cluster of sharp posts which are end up ; somehow in the mercurial way of cats she has made herself comfortable. Others are stretched or curled in the flower-beds and on the chunks

of fallen marble cornice and Corinthian capitals lying around, or in favourite dents like couches under the bushes. This will be early in the afternoon when they are not hungry any more, although the market has not yet folded up. They are more or less sated; not groggy and not really sleeping, because there is still a sense of opportunity in the air at this time of day, but they have only half an eye open for it.

A calico tom with a black neckline like a court decoration decides to investigate a bloody scrap of paper in which there are still a few scraps from one of the meat stalls, pulls his paw across it languidly a couple of times and saunters back to rest among the zinnias. On the first shelf of the ruin two kittens, one white as a sacred calf, box a moment, not having learnt to gauge their desires, then in disillusionment move apart.

Here and there older cats take a swipe or two at washing themselves or each other, and are not too drowsy to have their feelings hurt; obscure episodes of pride and disgrace are taking place all through the happy scene . . .

ELEANOR CLARK, *Rome and a Villa*

Toujours Gai!

The tortoiseshell cat
She sits on the mat,
As gay as a sunflower she;
In orange and black you see her blink,
And her waistcoat's white, and her nose is pink,
And her eyes are green of the sea.
But all is vanity, all the way;
Twilight's coming and close of day,
And every cat in the twilight's grey,
Every possible cat.

Author Unknown

Sly Puss

He is slye and wittie, and seéth so sharpely that he overcommeth darkness of the nighte by the shyninge lyghte of his eyne. In shape of body he is like unto a Leoparde, and hathe a greate mouthe. He doth delighte that he enjoyeth his libertie; and in his youth he is swifte, plyante, and merye. He maketh a rufull noyse and a gastefull when he profereth to fighte with another. He is a cruell beaste when he is wilde, and falleth on his owne feete from moste highe places . . . When he hathe a fayre skinne, he is, as it were, proude thereof, and then he goethe muche aboute to be seene.

JOHN BOSSEWELL, *Workes of Armorie*

Rumpus !

The Rum Tum Tugger is a Curious Cat :
If you offer him pheasant he would rather have grouse.
If you put him in a house he would much prefer a flat,
If you put him in a flat he'd rather have a house.
If you set him on a mouse then he only wants a rat,
If you set him on a rat then he'd rather chase a mouse.
Yes the Rum Tum Tugger is a Curious Cat—
And there isn't any call for me to shout it :
For he will do
As he do do
And there's no doing anything about it !

T. S. ELIOT, *The Rum Tum Tugger*

Conversation Piece

Tobermory entered the room and made his way with velvet tread and studied unconcern across to the group seated round the tea-table. A sudden hush of awkwardness and constraint fell on the company. Somehow there seemed an element of embarrassment in addressing on equal terms a domestic cat of acknowledged mental ability.

" Will you have some milk, Tobermory ? " asked Lady Blemley in a rather strained voice.

" I don't mind if I do," was the response, couched in a tone of even indifference. A shiver of suppressed excitement went through the listeners, and Lady Blemley might be excused for pouring out the saucerful of milk rather unsteadily.

" I am afraid I have spilt a good deal of it," she said apologetically.

" After all, it's not my Axminster," was Tobermory's rejoinder.

Another silence fell on the group, and then Miss Resker, in her best district-visitor manner, asked if the human language had been difficult to learn. Tobermory looked squarely at her for a moment and then fixed his gaze serenely on the middle distance. It was obvious that boring questions lay outside his scheme of life.

SAKI, *Tobermory*

Tomfoolery

There was a young curate of Kew,
Who kept a Tom cat in a pew ;
He taught it to speak
Alphabetical Greek
But it never got further than μ.

Author Unknown

CHAMPAGNE !

In the most romantic way imaginable— he aspired to meet the woman of his dreams

by MICHAEL ARLEN

PHILIP ALLWAYS had not been settled in England two months before he realized that the stars were not smiling down upon him as they should.

He was twenty-three years old. Born in Australia, he had lived there all his life, doing something helpful with sheep ; but recently he had inherited an immense and quite unexpected fortune from his father, a quiet man who had lived in New York and had also done something helpful with both sheep and speculations. The young multimillionaire was left with only one relative, a maternal uncle who lived in a respectable suburb in the north of London.

Young Philip Allways, " richest Australian playboy," got a good deal of publicity on his arrival in England to visit his mother's brother, but it was all in good fun, of course. He was known in the newspapers as " The Golden Idol " owing to his habit of answering questions with a vacant stare (and a series of amiable, antipodean grunts). Philip was a good-looking young demi-god.

In due course, he settled down to enjoy himself at his uncle's house in the respectable suburb in the north of London. Mr. Joplin was a retired builder of cheerful disposition. There were also a Mrs. Joplin and two Miss Joplins, who were very nice people, and they had the usual circle of friends, who were very nice people.

Philip Allways, after two months of being thoroughly Joplinized, approached his uncle one day and, with surprising determination, told him that he was leaving for New York.

But Philip was a romantic, a dreamer. His thoughts turned to love in the most romantic way imaginable, and he aspired to meet and win the woman of his dreams. But he knew he would never meet her within the Joplin circle. He would meet her in the heart of a great city. He would meet her amongst those slender and glamorous young women who stared at him with adorable idiocy from the shiny pages of the illustrated papers.

The Countess of Pippin bathing at Antibes.

Philip wanted to meet the beautiful young C. of P., and he wanted to look deep into her daft and dreamy eyes. *The Hon. Daphne*

Careless at Ascot . . . The Hon. D. Careless dancing with the Earl of Horse.

Philip felt positive that the Hon. D. Careless was right down his street. But how could he meet her ? She was a remote and exquisite enchantment. All the same, she could not be too hard to please if she liked dancing with the moronic-looking Earl of Horse.

Philip was not entirely without common sense, and he felt instinctively that even the most exquisite and remote young ladies might be influenced in favour of his publicized millions. Therefore, pretending to the worthy Joplins that he was embarking for New York on business, he settled in London at a large hotel in Park Lane, concealing his enormous wealth under the respectable obscurity of the name Jones, and started to look round with patient desperation.

Philip Jones was not long without acquaintances. Amongst the first of these was a pleasant sort of chap whom he met one evening at the Cesspool Bar, which is, of course, the well-known little Mayfair outpost-of-Empire managed by the formidable Miss Cissie Pool, thirteen stone, twelve and a half pounds at her most recent weighing-in.

Philip met this pleasant-looking chap in what appeared to be a moment of crisis in his drinking life. The dialogue he was privileged to overhear went as follows :

Miss Cissie Pool : Nothing doing. Out.

Chap : Oh, I say !

Miss C. P. : You owe me just on a fiver, Johnnie. Out.

C. : Listen, old girl, I'll pay you tomorrow. I'm on to a really good thing this time. A chap called Thistlewitt—you know old Thistlewitt—

Miss C. P. : Out !

As the pleasant-looking chap turned dismally away from the bar Philip invited him to have one. They were presently on such good terms of good-fellowship that his new acquaintance, who had introduced himself as John Fitzroy Pullman, found himself unable to refuse a temporary loan of a mere five pounds.

" Pay you back tomorrow," he said, always sound on technique.

" Pay me back ? " Philip stared. " Why ? I don't need it."

The expression of such refined sentiments completely floored Philip's new friend who was none other than the author's cousin Pullman—caught suspended, so to speak, in one of his frequent periods of martyrdom to the tyrannic despotism of the banking system.

No more than two days appear to have passed before my cousin Pullman felt positive that something most peculiar was going on

right under his nose. It had been clear from the first that in establishing contact with the man Jones he had got on to a good thing. It had been clear that the man Jones was a spender of the most formidable and delicious type.

But Pullman had frequently before met formidable spenders, most of whom were now in prison. Concentrating on the man Jones, he gradually made a startling discovery. Young Jones was that rarest of rays of sunshine, an open-hearted and generous chap, with money to burn. Real money. Not cheques. Not credit. Not confidence. Not charm. Cash.

My cousin Pullman says that it was, of course, without any ulterior motive that he at once made a bee-line for the young man's intimate friendship. And when he knew all, when he grasped that he had for days past been hobnobbing with one of the richest young men in the world, " The Golden Idol " in person, he was so stunned with his good fortune that he restrained himself only with difficulty from confessing to his aunt (my mother) that he had pawned the watch she had asked him to have mended.

" Worry no more," said J. F. Pullman to Philip. " From now on I shall be your guardian angel. To begin with, away with the name Jones. Erase it. Girls like La Pippin and Daphne Careless have been averting the eye from Joneses since they were tiny tots. We'll call you Philip O'Brien. Realistic, rugged, and radiant with *bonhomie*. Scratch any Irishman and he simply radiates *bonhomie*, both at and between meals, both in and out of quod. And the girls love it. Onward, Philip O'Brien ! "

My cousin Pullman says that there is nothing more sobering to the student of economics than thinking in millions. Here was he, a man who had for years past been nursing an overdraft that shrieked hideously every time he sought to forget it, now in close contact with a chap who feared that some girl might fall in love with him only for his money.

This thought weighed profoundly on John Fitzroy Pullman. Introducing Philip O'Brien to his friends, he never ceased to warn him that not one girl amongst the lot would hesitate to take a large bite out of him if she so much as suspected that he was the Exchequer's dream boy.

He warned Philip pointedly against the Hon. D. Careless, saying that he personally knew two wealthy young men who were now working because Daphne had given them the full treatment with her aristocratic, adorable, and avaricious eyes. He warned him strongly against the Countess of Pippin, saying that if she but knew he had been born with a silver spoon in his mouth she would instantly plan ways and means to stick a silver knife in his back.

Thus it will be seen that my cousin Pullman was acting as a man of integrity *in re* Allways *v.* Sirens. He would have continued storing up spiritual riches for himself but for the fatal intervention of his friend Thistlewitt. For Thistlewitt tempted J. F. Pullman, and he fell.

Now this chap Thistlewitt was a bachelor of sporting habits, and by profession a debtor. He enjoyed a first-class reputation amongst other bachelors of sporting habits for being as cagey as dammit.

Nevertheless, my cousin Pullman's mind was so exercised by his responsibility that one day he confided in this chap Thistlewitt the real name and fortune of the amiable young man known as Philip O'Brien.

Thistlewitt's reaction to this confidence was deplorably typical of a bachelor of sporting habits, for he immediately asked Pullman what he, Pullman, was getting out of it.

"Santa Claus," said this chap Thistlewitt, "doesn't come every day. Not even every Christmas. We must think."

"What about?" said Pullman.

"The situation," said Thistlewitt with bestial shrewdness, "is clear-cut. On one side, we have a young man with millions. On the other, we have you and me. To proceed. The young man wants love and glamour, but he doesn't want to be caught by a siren. Well, we'll give him de-sirenized love and glamour."

"We will?" said Pullman.

"We shall. To proceed. You have told me that this young man has cast eyes of ill-informed longing at such girls as Joan Pippin and Daphne Careless. You have rightly warned him against these charming young ladies as being past masters in the art of drowning kittens.

"To proceed. You have told me that, just to give the lad a treat, you introduced him to Miss Unity Star, of the Babylon Theatre. We now give Unity the real dope on 'Philip O'Brien,' she acts coy with him, he falls for the girl who loves a poor boy for himself, asks her to marry him, we save him from the siren's clutches, and he rewards us."

"Rewards us how?" said Pullman. "You, Thistlewitt, don't mean to tell me, Pullman, that we are going to take money from him?"

"Take money?" said Thistlewitt indignantly. "Me? Us? Pullman, you've got a nerve to suggest that we could even dream of doing such a thing as taking money from anyone. But we might borrow a nice bit from a grateful young friend."

"Oh, I see," said my cousin Pullman with relief, for like all well-brought-up Englishmen he disliked nothing more than a

financial transaction which even savoured of dishonesty, especially on the surface.

" I take the view," said this chap Thistlewitt, " that we ought to clean up in about three days. Of course, we'll pay it all back."

All the same, Pullman had his doubts as to the one hundred per cent chances of the Thistlewitt Three-Day Plan. For it seemed unlikely that once a tough character like Unity got her platinum talons deep into the emotions of the Richest Boy in the World, anything but a really serious motor accident would waken her to a keen sense of spiritual values.

Unity Star was a bewitching young American actress who, being utterly devoid of any talent for the stage, had failed to make a name in America but had met with considerable success in London. This phenomenon is of frequent occurrence ; it also works the other way, and was known in the early 'twenties as Hams across the Sea.

Unity's glorious eyes were bright with what may well have been girlish innocence, for no American girl had ever collected more jewellery from more girlish-innocence fanciers in less time than Unity Star. She was at this time delighting the innocogentsia of London in the musical treat, *Why Light Women Float.*

My cousin Pullman's forebodings were not put at rest by the rapt ferocity with which Unity received his information that Philip O'Brien was really Philip Allways.

" Oh, boy ! " she sighed. " Is *that* a break ? Fancy my little Philip with all that lovely, lovely money ! "

Later that night Pullman and Thistlewitt looked in at the night club to which " my little Philip " had taken Unity to supper and to dance. Sitting in a corner, they watched the Thistlewitt Three-Day Plan bearing fruit.

" Look at her action," said Thistlewitt with admiration. " That girl will go far. Look at her swing at the ball—faultless. No wonder America is the world's greatest industrial power. Look at just one little American girl's industrial power over a glass of champagne. Look at the dreamy expression with which she's digging for bituminous coal with a spade designed by a diamond king."

But my cousin Pullman's reaction to the spectacle of Philip falling in love with Unity was not that of a bachelor of sporting habits. Let us give J. F. Pullman his due. That night he slept uneasily for no more than eight hours. His conscience smote him sorely.

Saying nothing to Thistlewitt, that man of iron, he determined to tell Philip first thing in the morning that Unity knew who he was and was aiming to get a stranglehold on his dividends. He was too

late. He had no sooner entered the young man's rooms than his psychic aura told him that America's industrial power had been too snappy for him.

"Johnnie," cried Philip, "the very man I want to see!"

My cousin Pullman confesses that he whinnied uneasily.

"Name your present!" cried the young man. "I'm giving the whole world presents today."

"This is very sudden, Philip."

"Congratulate me, Johnnie. I'm the luckiest chap in the world. It was a marvellous idea of yours to make me pretend I had no more than a few hundred pounds to my name. For what do we find?

"We find I am engaged to be married not only to the loveliest girl in the world but to the sweetest, kindest, truest, bravest, and most unselfish. Guess who."

Never, says my cousin Pullman, has he found himself more desperately disinterested in guessing games, and he left the building in a most uneasy frame of mind.

But this chap Thistlewitt, when he heard the news, did not share his uneasiness. All he did was to warn Pullman most urgently against telling Philip that the girl was a gold-digger until he, Thistlewitt, gave the word.

Driven by his better feelings, Pullman called on Unity at her dressing-room at the Babylon Theatre that night. The small room was a bower of the most expensive flowers imaginable, topped off by a rather caddish basket of orchids.

"All from Philip?" said Pullman sternly.

"All from my boy," sighed Unity. "Thanks a lot, Johnnie, for introducing me to a young girl's dream of happiness."

"So he has told you about his money-bags?"

"Why not? Don't our hearts beat as one? After I said I'd live with him in a cottage, he offered to buy me a palace."

"Unity," said my cousin Pullman sadly, "have you no conscience?"

"Have I no *what*?" snapped the beautiful one. "Listen, have you the nerve to imply that I would be taking presents from Mr. Allways if I didn't love him to death?"

My cousin Pullman says that this was such an unexpected development that he could do no more than gape at the indignant girl.

"You love him, Unity?"

"Certainly I love him, you umbrella-carrying rabbit. I knew he was my ideal man the first moment I saw him. He is my treasure and my heart's delight. He is my white rose and my red rose, and he is my little tiger burning bright in the forests of the night."

My cousin Pullman, at first stunned by this evidence of her wide reading, pulled himself together and said what he had come to say.

" If you really love him, Unity, you will have every chance to prove it. Ever since I told you how rich he really was, the Pullman conscience has been driving me bats. I shall correct this by telling Philip that I have been a dirty dog and that you knew all the time that he was rolling in bullion and that you—"

" John Fitzroy Pullman," said Unity softly, " you wouldn't do a thing like that to a hard-working girl, would you ? "

My cousin Pullman says that he lost no time in backing towards the door. " I can't stand by," he said, " and see a nice chap like Philip tied for life to a—"

" To a what ? " said Unity, moving nearer.

" You know what," he said shrewdly, bolting through the door.

Philip was whistling blithely when Pullman burst into his rooms, trying to look like an avenging angel.

" How do you like my new suit, Johnnie ? I'm taking Unity out for supper tonight and—my dear chap, what on earth are you pulling such faces for ? "

My cousin Pullman, realizing that his features were not perhaps all that were required of an avenging angel keen on his job, unscrewed them, eyed Philip with profound sorrow, and spoke his piece.

He says that the next few minutes were fraught with the most meaty emotions.

" Christmas ! " said Philip at last. " I'm beginning to wish Dad had never left me a bean. So she knew all the time and was angling for me, while I, poor fish, was thinking—just because she said she liked me even though I'd have to go to work to keep her—that she really loved me."

At this point my cousin Pullman's conscience should have regained its tranquillity. He had confessed his sin. He had righted a wrong. He had dynamited an adventuress. He had saved a nice young man from an unhappy marriage.

Considering all this, it was with bewilderment that he found himself uncomfortable. Could it be that he had wronged Unity ? Could it be that he had besmeared the true course of premarital bliss ?

" Pullman," cried his conscience, " what of twin hearts, which had all the earmarks of being about to beat as one—but for your squalid interference ? "

Meanwhile, poor Philip was pacing up and down the room,

breaking a tumbler here, smashing an ashtray there, and kicking a chair as he passed by.

"Look here," said Pullman, "you don't have to go off the deep end about this. I spent some time in the Navy, so I'm pretty shrewd about ships that pass in the night. And I take the view that Unity isn't exactly a passer. So run along now and take her out to supper and radiate *bonhomie*."

"Take her out to supper!" Philip cried. "Me? A girl like that would be able to twist a fathead like me round her little finger in a minute, for I'd believe anything she said. Gosh, I'll never believe a woman again—never!"

"But listen—"

"On your way!" cried Philip, grabbing a vase and smashing it against the wall.

History will tell, says my cousin Pullman, that in the course of the next twenty-four hours he left no stone unturned in trying to bring the two together for a conference. Unity was very willing. In fact, she rang up Philip frequently, but he would not answer.

Nor would Philip see Pullman. Even Thistlewitt did not have the heart to make a touch, and it was he who, living up to his reputation for being as cagey as dammit, helped to resolve the impasse. Confessing himself abashed in the face of true love, he said: "My considered opinion is that Philip's position must be undermined by craft. Let us think, then let us confer."

The conference was held that very night in Unity's dressing-room at the Babylon Theatre.

"To begin with," said Thistlewitt, "we must get you a loving father. Don't interrupt—we know you've got one. But I mean a father here and now, a professional father who knows his onions, and not your own sweet old daddy back in America who knows only synthetic onions or he wouldn't have let you out of his sight. The father I suggest is called something strong like Mr. Budfoot—"

"I won't have a daddy called Budfoot. Anything you say, but not Budfoot. Smith, if you like. Or Washington."

"Too English," said Pullman.

"Smith?" said Thistlewitt.

"Washington," said Pullman.

"Are you crazy?" cried Unity. "George Washington, English?"

"Perhaps the only Englishman," said Pullman smugly, "to make a real and lasting success in America."

"To proceed," began Thistlewitt.

"Not me," said the urbane Miss Star, "unless this fossilized historical chiseller—"

"Your loving daddy," said Thistlewitt hastily, "is called Washington Smith. Right ? He is a business man from Detroit and is now visiting London to see how his innocent little Unity is getting on as an actress. We know, of course, that she's not getting on worth a damn as an actress but is doing fine as a man-eater.

"To proceed. Our Mr. Smith doesn't give a hoot for all the millionaires in the world, since he has plenty of dough himself. Also, he doesn't like to see a young man making zizipompom with his little daughter's affections.

"So he calls on Philip, fixes him with a frosty Detroit eye, tells him that Unity isn't after anybody's money, and asks him what his intentions are, whether serious or septic."

"Thistlewitt," cried Unity, "you are a genius. Why didn't I think of that ? All I want is five minutes' quiet talk with my Philip."

"Remember," said my cousin Pullman, "we have first of all got to find a convincing Washington Smith."

"My bookmaker," said Thistlewitt, "is one of the most convincing scoundrels I know. Stout, hearty, forty, and fruity. He'll do us to a turn."

"We don't want," said Pullman, "any of your low sporting friends in this refined affair of twin hearts. Besides, he's not an American."

"My agent ! " said Unity. "The man who signs me up with managers—he's a marvellous actor—how else would I get a job ? "

"Bright girl ! " said Thistlewitt. "To proceed."

At four o'clock the following afternoon the three met in a corner of the lounge of the hotel at which Philip was staying. They were waiting for Unity's agent, whose collaboration she had engaged that morning.

My cousin Pullman says that, for his part, he could have waited much longer with pleasure ; the appearance of the bogus Mr. Washington Smith depressed him profoundly.

Unity's agent, a beefy and bibulous type, had disguised himself as an American by wearing one of those loud gay ties with which politicians attend the funeral of a colleague on the opposite side, and by chewing a cigar in imitation of Mr. Groucho Marx.

"Boys," said this character, "Unity has wised me up about my act, and I'm all set to go whenever you say the word."

"Go," said Thistlewitt dreamily, "at once. Your assumed American accent and your out-of-date slang wouldn't deceive a backward child."

"Uh ? " said Unity's agent. "Wise guy, huh ? Listen, fish-face, do you want for me to tell you something—"

"Look here," said Pullman to Unity, "if this hideous agent of yours goes to Philip disguised as your dear old daddy, it's a safe bet that he will prefer to eat cinders rather than ever see you again."

"He's all right," said Unity impatiently. "He certainly is no beauty, but he'll put on a fine act with Philip—"

"You bet I will, baby. I'll talk turkey to that sap. You betcha. Before I've finished with that dumb Australian—"

"I only wish I could persuade you," sighed my cousin Pullman, "that a touch of delicate melancholy is required in the dear old daddy of a girl like Unity. Now go on up to Philip's rooms and do your worst, turkey and all."

"We'll be seeing you, Daddy dear," Unity cried after the broad, retreating back.

"You betcha," he cried back hoarsely.

"Nineteen twenty-nine," said Thistlewitt, "was the year when our transatlantic cousins stopped betcha-ing. And rightly."

It was entirely in accordance with the plan that ten minutes later the three followed the theatrical agent upstairs to Philip's suite. Then Pullman and Thistlewitt were to shove Unity into the drawing-room to join Philip and her "daddy," and bolt to await the theatrical agent downstairs.

Events did not work out in quite this manner. On reaching the door to Philip's suite, the conspirators were horrified to find that a crowd had preceded them. This crowd, composed of a waiter, two housemaids, an unidentifiable small boy carrying a hammer, and the hotel fireman, was listening intently and with every mark of keen pleasure to what was apparently a play of elemental forces within.

"Turkey!" said Pullman with disgust. "Philip found him out in two ticks."

The tableau that met their eyes in the drawing-room was one which would have displeased any social arbiter worthy of the name. Philip, cowering in a far corner, was feebly trying to wave a bottle of beer at the intolerable theatrical agent, who was apparently taking an ungovernable pleasure in earning his ten per cent.

"A young moron like you," he was shouting, "needs a lesson he'll never forget. Yes, sir. You think a bit of money makes you somebody, you think you can turn your back on a lovely girl like my daughter without applying for a visa. But I'll tell you something. I wouldn't have any daughter of mine marry a bit of soiled cellophane like you if you were to apologize to her on your bended knees. You betcha."

"Daddy," cried Unity, "don't be too hard on him!"

Only then did the wretched Philip catch sight of the group by

the door, whereupon his eyes lit up like those of a fawn that sees Mummy come charging to his assistance.

" Unity ! " he cried. " For heaven's sake tell your father it's all been a terrible mistake. I'll apologize—I'll do anything you like—if you'll forgive me. If it hadn't been for that fellow Pullman, all this would never have happened."

" Are you Pullman ? " said Mr. Smith, approaching Thistlewitt.

" Darling," Unity ran to Philip, " he didn't hurt you, did he ? He doesn't mean it really—it's only his manner. He's so used to theatrical people."

This chap Thistlewitt, with many years' experience of dodging creditors waving blunt instruments, easily by-passed the beefy agent.

" Everything's fine now," Pullman said to the fellow. " Let's get out and leave them together. And you can, as from now, drop that transatlantic catarrh from your vocal chords."

" Well, Smith," said Thistlewitt, as they slid out of the room. " you certainly earn your money. Yes, to coin a phrase, yes."

" Let's do this right," said the fellow, opening the front door of the suite and yelling, " Champagne ! " at the startled waiter in the corridor.

He then insisted on going back to the love nest, where they found Philip and Unity sitting very close together on the sofa.

" Listen, twin hearts," he said, " we've got to see this thing put on a proper basis before we leave you together. I'm an honest man, that's me. Unity, tell him the truth."

My cousin Pullman and Thistlewitt listened with horror as Unity stripped the Babylon Pact of its secrecy.

" You see, Philip dear," Unity said, " I simply had to see you once again just to tell you I wasn't a gold-digger and that you had nothing to fear from me—that is, if you really love me as I love you—"

" You bet he does," growled the theatrical agent.

My cousin Pullman says that his horror gave way to relief and that his heart grew big with unrationed emotion as he saw Philip smile blissfully into Unity's dancing eyes.

" Darling," he said, " I don't care what tricks you played. I don't care about anything—except that I hope you'll never leave me again—and I don't care who hears me say so—"

" That's talking turkey," said the agent heartily. " Attaboy. Unity, he's a good boy."

Philip, grabbing Unity's hand, appeared to have taken a fancy to the deplorable fellow.

" You must be a most efficient theatrical agent," he said, grinning foolishly, " and I hope you'll take on the job of managing my

investments for me."

"Sure, I will, Phil. Unity, he's a good boy. I'll say so. You're O.K., boy. Your investments? I'll fix 'em."

"That's *my* line," said Thistlewitt bitterly. "Theatre, you. Fix 'em, me."

At this point the champagne was brought in.

The healths were drunk, and Thistlewitt and my cousin Pullman were preparing to slip out, beckoning to the agent to go with them, when he said, "One moment, boys. We'll all have dinner tonight. Ritz, eight o'clock, and put on the works. It's on me, and we'll celebrate the engagement. Ain't I making dough on this? You betcha."

"Mr. Stupid," Unity said, "how can I dine at eight when I have to be at the theatre?"

"But only," said Philip, beaming lovingly, "until the end of this week."

"I've fixed all that," said the agent. "You don't have to go to the theatre tonight, Unity. I bought it this morning and aim to pull it down—too draughty."

My cousin Pullman says that while he has sometimes been silenced, owing to superior weight, and Thistlewitt has often been stunned, neither had ever before been the principal actors in a stunned silence of such majestic proportions.

"Daddy," said Unity at last, "you *are* extravagant. What do you want a theatre for, when you already own—"

"I couldn't help it, honey. Ever since I arrived in England, three days ago, I've been looking for something to take my mind off doing nothing—"

My cousin Pullman says that his nimble mind now began to register how badly he'd been slicing his drives. But it was this chap Thistlewitt, with his first-class knowledge of money at second-hand, who cried with rapture: "You mean you're her *real* father—Washington Smith, the lumber king?"

Unity giggled.

"You see," said Mr. Smith, rather sheepishly, "Unity and me got kind of tired of all the playboys who were trying to marry her for her money. So we put her on the stage in the hope that some regular guy would just fall in love with her for her looks and not for her dough—a boy like Philip here and not like you two chisellers."

"For myself," said Thistlewitt with dignity, "I yield to no one in my disloyalty to other people's money."

"You've got a job, boy," said Mr. Smith amiably. "I need a secretary who'll fight off the other bank robbers."

My cousin Pullman says he was so filled with romantic bliss at

the spectacle of first-class love, which had caused not only two hearts but also two billions to beat as one, that he scarcely heard the formidable Mr. Smith's questions.

"You want something, too ?"

"Strong drink," said my cousin Pullman. "You betcha and *vice vercha.*"

* * *

ANSWERS to WHEN KNIGHTS WERE BOLD . . . on page 42

1. *Wilfred of Ivanhoe, in the novel, "Ivanhoe," by Sir Walter Scott.*
2. *Sir Lancelot, in the poem, "The Lady of Shalott," by Alfred, Lord Tennyson.*
3. *The White Knight, in "Through the Looking-Glass," by Lewis Carroll.*
4. *King Pellinore, in "The Sword in the Stone," by T. H. White.*
5. *The Knight, in "The Canterbury Tales," by Geoffrey Chaucer.*
6. *Don Quixote de la Mancha, in the novel of that title, by Miguel de Cervantes.*
7. *Sir John Falstaff, in "King Henry IV," by William Shakespeare*
8. *Bad Sir Brian Botany, in the poem of that title by A. A. Milne.*

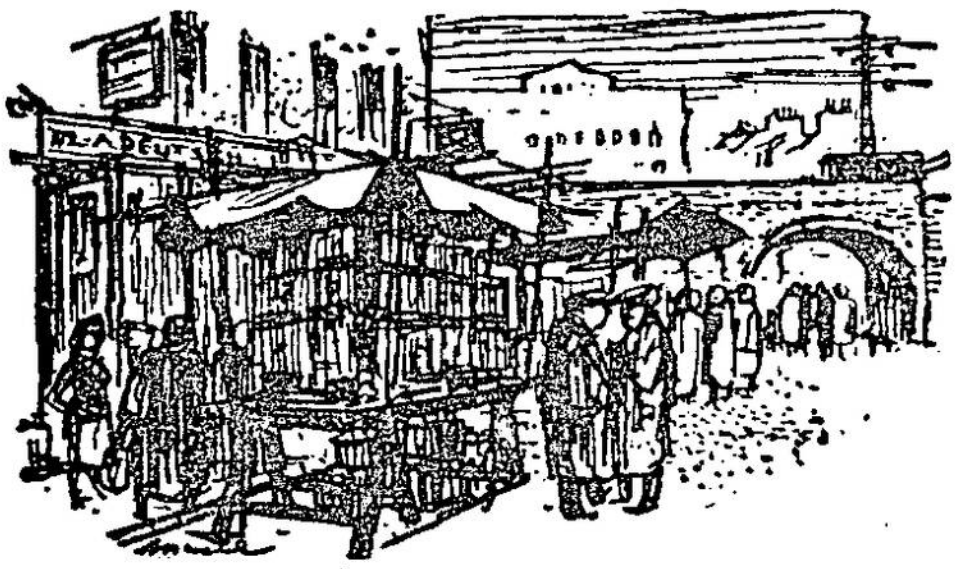
* * *

WITH INTENT

Anthony Trollope had gone up to write at the round table in the library at the Athenaeum, and spread his things all over it. It was early in the morning, and there is seldom anyone there at that time. On this occasion, however, two country clergymen were sitting on either side of the fire reading one of his own books : after a time they began to talk about them.

"It is a great pity Trollope does not get some fresh characters," said one. "Yes," said the other, "one gets so tired of meeting the same people again and again, especially Mrs. Proudie." Then Trollope got up, and planting himself on the rug between them with his back to the fire, said, "Gentlemen, I do not think it would be honest to listen to you talking about my books any more, without telling you that I am the victim ; but I will add that I quite agree with what you have been saying, and that I will give you my word of honour that Mrs. Proudie shall die in the very next book I write."

AUGUSTUS HARE, *In My Solitary Life, edited by Malcolm Barnes*



Enchanting new Story by the Author of "Make Me An Offer"

IT was thanks to Mr. Kandinsky that Joe knew a unicorn when he saw one.

He also knew that the Elephant and Castle was the Infanta of Castille, a Spanish Princess. He knew that Moses was an Egyptian priest, that the Chinese invented fireworks, and that pregnant was going to have a baby. Joe was six, and thanks to Mr. Kandinsky, he was educated, although he didn't go to school, for he had to look after his mother till they came to Africa.

His father said to Joe when he was still ve, " Look after mother till you come," and Joe said he would. Soon after, Joe's father went to Africa, with two suitcases and a Madeira hat for the hot weather.

Joe lived upstairs at Number 111, Fashion Street. There was a bedroom and a kitchen, and the kitchen had a fireplace and a gas-stove, but no sink. The tap was at the top of the first flight of stairs, and Mr. Kandinsky used it too. The lavatory was in the yard at the back.

Mr. Kandinsky lived in a room on the ground floor, and had a workshop in the basement. The workshop had a window below ground level, and there was an iron grille over the pavement for the light to come through. In the little area outside the window were bits of newspaper and an old hat and a sauce-bottle, and Joe wondered how they got through the iron bars, because it was a top hat and the bottle was the tomato-sauce kind with a wide bottom.

" We ought to look, Mr. Kandinsky," Joe said one day, " because maybe there are some pound notes and sixpences mixed up with it all."

" Joe," replied Mr. Kandinsky, " who has pound notes or even sixpences to lose in Fashion Street ? " So the window was never open, except in the summer it was lowered a few inches at the top, and a lot of dust came into the workshop.

" It was thanks to Mr. Kandinsky that —

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A KID FOR TWO FARTHINGS

by WOLF MANKOWITZ

—Joe knew a Unicorn when he saw one"

Mr. Kandinsky was a trousers-maker. In the workshop he had a sewing-machine, and a bench with the surface all shining from where he and Shmule pressed the trousers. In the fireplace were two big gas-rings with two big goose-irons beside them. When the cloth was soaked in a pail and spread over the trousers, and the hot goose-iron pressed on top, a great cloud of steam arose. Mr. Kandinsky always said it was bad for your health and the worst thing in the tailoring, even causing the consumption. On the wall above were three hooks with large brown-paper and cardboard patterns hanging on them. On the mantel were two boxes with flat pieces of white tailor's chalks in them, and hundreds of cloth patterns in books, and dozens of reels of cotton.

Mr. Kandinsky had two pictures. Over his bench was a big print of a lady with her head bowed sitting on top of a large grey-green ball. Her eyes were bandaged and she was holding a broken harp. Mr. Kandinsky said, " This ball is the world and this lady is Hope who is always with the world. She is blindfolded because if she could see what happens she would lose hope and then where would she be ? What this broken harp means I don't know."

" Maybe it's a bit of another painting," Joe said.

" Maybe it is," said Mr. Kandinsky, " who knows ?."

" Who knows ? " repeated Joe, because he liked the way Mr. Kandinsky said things. " Who knows ? " he said again, putting his head to one side, opening his hands, and trying to lift his eyebrows.

There was a brown photograph of an old man with a long beard and side curls, and bushy eyebrows, and a great curved nose with curved nostrils. This was Mr. Kandinsky's father. " A pious man, Joe," Mr. Kandinsky said, " very respected in the whole village, and the finest coat-maker in the whole country."

" Not a trousers-maker ? " asked Joe.

" Certainly not," said Mr. Kandinsky. " He was a great man and he would never lower himself to be a trousers-maker."

" Why aren't you a coat-maker, Mr. Kandinsky ? " asked Joe. Mr. Kandinsky, who always answered questions, replied, " Because my wise father put me to trousers-making thinking that in this way Kandinsky and Son would be able to make complete suits. And you know what that means Joe ? It means bespoke tailoring—no more jobbing for other people. You can be an artist, not just a workman, somebody can send you sackcloth and you will make it up into a pair of trousers. But it was not to be. It was a dream, Joe. Never mind. Life is all dreams—dreams and work. That's all it is."

After this talk Joe nodded at the photograph of Reb Zadek Kandinsky when he came into the workshop. The stern eyes looked past him into the future, a lost future of Kandinsky and Son, bespoke tailors. The curved nostrils turned disdainfully away from Mr. Kandinsky, the Fashion Street trousers-maker, well known in the trade, but not in the same class as his father, a master-tailor, who died cross-legged on his bench, stitching the revers of the first coat he made in London. " May he find his place in peace," Mr. Kandinsky said, " that last coat was beautiful, I tell you, Joe, beautiful."

" I think your trousers are lovely, Mr. Kandinsky," Joe said, to cheer Mr. Kandinsky up.

" Thank you, Joe," he said, " I will make you a pair of blue serge trousers." And he did, a miniature pair of men's trousers, with turn-ups, and a cash pocket, and everything, even proper flies.

The whole house was Mr. Kandinsky's, not his, but he paid the whole rent and Joe's mother gave him ten shillings every week. He was an old friend and the arrangement was made before Joe's father went away. Mr. Kandinsky could spare the room. " I am the only Kandinsky extant—which means the last Kandinsky," he told Joe.

Joe thought how it must make you old to be the last one extant. He looked at Mr. Kandinsky. He was very old but his face wasn't worn out. In fact, he had much more face than Joe, and Joe wasn't extant at all, having both his mother and father as well as Mr. Kandinsky. Joe kept a pet in the backyard, usually a day-old chick which sometimes lived for two or three weeks. After Mr. Kandinsky told him he had no people, he decided to call his next pet Kandinsky in memory of that family.

At Friday-night supper Mr. Kandinsky and Joe's mother talked about Africa and Joe's father and what he was doing there and how soon Joe and his mother would go out to him.

" You know, Rebecca," Mr. Kandinsky said, " your fried fish is not just fish—it is manna from heaven."

" You are always paying me compliments, Mr. Kandinsky," Joe's mother said.

" And why not, Rebecca ? " said Mr. Kandinsky. " You are the prettiest girl in the whole East End."

" Girl ! " said Joe's mother, and laughed, blushing so that she did indeed look quite pretty.

" Isn't she pretty, Joe ? " asked Mr. Kandinsky.

" I think you are very pretty and nice," Joe said to his mother, although she had stopped smiling, and her face looked sad and not so pretty.

" For how long ? " she said. " How long is anyone pretty ? " Mr. Kandinsky cleared his throat, which meant he was going to say something important. Joe looked at him and waited.

" You are pretty as long as someone loves you, Rebecca," he said, " and so many people love you that, believe me, you are very pretty. Look at me. I am ugly and old, but even I am pretty when someone loves me."

" I love you, Mr. Kandinsky," Joe said. " One morning you will look quite pretty." Mr. Kandinsky put his hand on Joe's head.

" Thank you, Joe," he said, " I feel a little bit prettier already. And to celebrate I will have another piece of this wonderful fried fish which the miracle of your mother's cooking has made as sweet as honey." Mr. Kandinsky, Joe thought, never got tired of fried fish.

" So what does he say in his letter this week ? " Mr. Kandinsky would ask. " How is the Kaffir business ? "

Joe's mother read parts of the letter out aloud. Sometimes they were very long letters, full of business details. The long excited

letters had money in them. But other letters were very short. There was no message in them for Joe or Mr. Kandinsky at all, and for Rebecca just a few words. These were the bad letters, and if Joe asked too many questions after they arrived, his mother's face would look at him as if she couldn't see, and if he went on asking questions, it would suddenly begin to tremble and then she would cry, hugging him and making his face wet with her tears.

In the mornings Joe's mother went to the Whitechapel Road where she worked in a millinery shop. She trimmed hats with bunches of artificial fruit and flowers, and Mr. Kandinsky said she was the best and most artistic hat-trimmer in the millinery trade. Because she didn't come home until the late afternoon, Joe ate with Mr. Kandinsky and Shmule at twelve o'clock, downstairs, in the workshop. Mr. Kandinsky never allowed Joe's mother to leave something cooked for them.

" I am an old cook myself," he told Joe, " although your mother is the best cook in the world, Joe—I am not saying anything against her cooking—but I like my own cooking."

Mr. Kandinsky cooked on one of the gas-rings in the workshop. On one of them a big goose-iron was always heating, and on the other a large cooking-pot, with two handles, bubbled quietly all day long. Into the pot Mr. Kandinsky threw pieces of beef or a small breast of lamb, with plenty of onions and pepper and salt, and some large potatoes. Or a large marrow-bone cooked with carrots, or mutton cooked with haricot beans and onions.

At a quarter to twelve, Joe went up the street to the baker on the corner to buy three onion rolls. Then they all sat down with big enamel plates full of steaming stew, eating and talking. Joe liked Mr. Kandinsky's cooking very much. " The best cooks are men, Joe," said Mr. Kandinsky. " Such men-cooks get thousands of pounds from the kings of Europe for cooking dinners no better than this."

Mr. Kandinsky talked a lot, but Shmule was often quiet. Shmule was short and broad, and very strong. He had bright red hair which curled into small flames, although after a haircut it was more like a piece of astrakhan. His skin was pale and his eyes grey, and he wasn't religious because every Saturday he spent the whole day at the gymnasium developing himself.

Developing yourself was the only thing Shmule wanted to talk about, which was the reason why he said very little, because Joe was too young to develop himself, and Mr. Kandinsky was too old.

Occasionally Mr. Kandinsky would bring Shmule into the conversation by saying, " *Nu*, Shmule, have you got a new muscle to show us ? " Shmule at once took off his jacket. He would roll up his shirt sleeves and clench his fists and bend his elbows, and large muscles appeared everywhere. Sometimes he took his shirt off as well and put his arms over his head, and enormous bands of muscle stood up on his back and chest. Joe clapped and Mr. Kandinsky called Shmule " Maccabeus," which means " The Hammer," and was the name in which Shmule wrestled.

Shmule was going to be a wrestling champion, which meant he had to beat Louis Dalmatian, the Stepney Thrasher, Turk Robert, Bully Bason, and the dreaded Python Macklin.

Between Shmule and Mr. Kandinsky, Joe learnt a great deal about the world. Though he was a bit young, Shmule taught him the position of defence and how to give an uppercut. But it was Mr. Kandinsky who told Joe all about unicorns.

It was the afternoon that Joe's chick, Kandinsky, was found dead. It lay on its back with its legs up in the air, a ball of cotton wool and two matchsticks. Joe was worried because he had done everything the day-old-chick man in Club Row told him to do, and yet the chick died.

Mr. Kandinsky suggested that perhaps—you had to consider all possibilities—Joe wasn't a natural born chicken-raiser. Chickens just weren't Joe's speciality. Maybe he should try a dog or a lizard, or fish. This made Joe wonder whether it wouldn't be best to write to his father for a big animal, because, naturally, small animals only have small lives and they lose them more easily.

Mr. Kandinsky had been studying Africa in some detail since Joe's father went there; consequently, he was in an excellent position to advise Joe on the habits of larger animals.

They discussed the Lion with some hope, because many cubs have been trained into good pets, but lions eat only meat, and where would they get enough to feed it? You couldn't fool a lion with vegetable stew; even Mr. Kandinsky's cooking would only make it angry and then it would probably eat them all. The Giraffe was nice, but with such a long neck, you couldn't get it in the house. A Zebra is only a horse with stripes and you can see horses every day in the street.

"Maybe," Joe suggested, "maybe my father could send a unicorn."

"A unicorn is a public house," Shmule said, looking up from a small book he was reading on the principles of Judo.

"Don't show your ignorance on the subject Shmule," Mr. Kandinsky said. Then he told Joe about unicorns.

"Every animal when it was made by the Almighty was given one extra-special present," said Mr. Kandinsky. "The squirrel was given a wonderful tail which could hold on to anything so he wouldn't fall from the trees, the horse was given strong fine legs so he could run fast, the lion was given great jaws, and the elephant a trunk so he could take a shower whenever he felt like it, because an elephant is so large, how else could he keep clean?

"But the unicorn was given the most special present of all. He was given a magic horn which could cure anything anyone was ever sick from, because it could grant anybody's wish—straight off. And this horn, consequently, was worth £10,000 cash, anywhere in the world. Don't ask me why the unicorn got this present. Someone had to get it, so why not him? Anyhow, he got it and no one else. And this, of course, is why unicorns are so scarce, you won't even find one in the zoo.

" At one time unicorns were common as cart-horses, wherever you went in the streets you would see half a dozen. That was in the days when no one was poor. Then when people became poor all the unicorns had their horns stolen and sold, and you can imagine what that did to them. Could a lion live without its jaws, could an elephant go on without a shower-bath, could I exist without making trousers ? Of course not, so how could a unicorn live without its horn ?

" Ah, Joe, they died in their thousands, the lovely unicorns. They gathered together in dusty yards and at the bottom of those streets which lead nowhere. They nuzzled one another for comfort, and closed their eyes so as not to remember what they had lost.

" Their fine white coats became spotted and dingy, and their beautiful sleek muscles slipped away into twisted sinew. They pined, they shrank, they faded, they died, and their death was sad for they were eaten by poverty, swallowed up in the darkness of a pit with no bottom, so that no one ever saw them again.

" And this was the pity of it, my Joe ! The unicorns passed away, but they left poverty in the world and sickness. Poverty is still here. Don't ask me why. What do I know ?

" But sometimes still, in spite of everything, a man goes from strength to strength, a woman's beauty does not fade. And in the same way some unicorns lived. They were the clever ones. They had seen how things were going and they did not waste time in blaming men for their ingratitude, or cursing life, or threatening God, or any such stupidity. They set themselves to plan an escape. One of them came forward and said to the rest, ' Listen, my friends. We must do something, otherwise there will be no unicorns left in the world.'

" One or two gathered round him to listen, some with hope in their hearts, some with doubt, a few with the spirit of revolt which does not care either for hope or doubt. To these he said, ' Living means waste, but let those who want to live, live.'

" This great unicorn had been told about Africa by an old unicorn when he was a baby and he had never forgotten. To Africa he led his people, and there they are although their terrible experiences had made them careful about being seen by men, and nowadays you don't see them very often. But they are even bigger now, and stronger even, and so fierce they will fight at the drop of a hat.

" But without doubt, Joe," said Mr. Kandinsky, " without doubt, Shmule, you wrestler," he said, " there is absolutely no reason why there shouldn't be unicorns in Africa."

" What do I know ? " asked Shmule.

" Could you get a unicorn into the house ? " Joe asked.

" A small unicorn," Mr. Kandinsky said, " certainly. There is no reason why a small unicorn couldn't be got into the house. Would you like some more *tzimmis*, Joe ? " He stirred the carrots in the saucepan on his gas-ring so that a great cloud arose.

After Kandinsky, the day-old chick, died, Joe went to the animal market, because if you wanted a unicorn, the best place in the world to look for it was Club Row.

Joe had his own way of walking through the market. It made it much larger if you started in the middle where the herring-women fished salted herrings out of barrels with red hands, dipped them in water, and then cleaned and sliced them thinly with long thin knives.

From there you walked up to Alf, the singing-bird man; then cut round the back, coming through to the other end where the dogs were. But if there was something you wanted to buy it was much better to start at one end by the singing birds and walk through, looking carefully at every stall.

Alf, the singing-bird man, came to Mr. Kandinsky for repairs so he knew Joe and always spoke to him, even if he was busy selling someone a canary. Alf was against day-old chicks as pets. He pulled his light brown overall coat down, pushed his cap back from his eyes, and told Joe when he bought Kandinsky, " You ain't doing that chick no favour, Joe, taking him away without his mother, alone—he doesn't know how to give a peep-peep yet—and putting him in a box with a drop of water and a handful of straw. That rotten day-old-chick man should be put in a box himself, the louse, selling chicks to anyone with a sixpence. A chick like this needs his mum or a special hot-box ; he don't just grow up any old how any old where, he must have special care, he shouldn't catch cold."

Near Alf's stall there was a jellied-eel stand. It had a big enamel bowl of grey jellied eels, small bowls for eating from, a large pile of lumps of bread, and three bottles of vinegar. There were also orange and black winkles in little tubs, and large pink whelks. Three or four people stood around shaking vinegar on their eels and scooping them up with bread. A little thin man in a white muffler was helping and dropped a large piece of eel on the ground.

Behind the stand a very fat man with a striped apron and a Homburg hat waved a ladle in his hand and shouted, " Best eels, fresh jellied, buy 'em and try 'em, eels." Over the stand a red, white and blue banner flapped. " The Eel King," it said.

Opposite the Eel King was a green barrow with dark green water-melons, and a white enamelled table top with halves and slices of melon and a large knife. Joe pretended he couldn't make up his mind whether to buy some jellied eels or a slice of melon. He watched people eating eels and shaking vinegar on them, and then looked back at the large wide slices of red melon with glossy black seeds bursting from them.

In the end he bought a twopenny slice of melon and pretended it was jellied eels, scooping the red flesh with his teeth and saying, " Blast ! " and " Bloody ! " when the seeds dropped to the pavement.

While he scraped the thick skin of the melon, Joe watched the Indian fortune-teller, who wore a turban and sold green, yellow and red perfume in small bottles. Whenever a woman bought a bottle of perfume the Indian looked darkly into a large glass bowl which turned purple or orange, and sliding his hand beneath brought out a small envelope with a fortune in it ; the pavement all round his stall was covered with torn envelopes. When the market finished, Joe saw an Indian girl who wore a long blue silk robe packing the bottles into

boxes on a barrow. When the Indian pushed the barrow away, the girl walked behind him; they went to the bottom of the street and turned away into the darkness under the railway arches, back to India.

The Sunday came when Joe had saved enough of the sixpences Mr. Kandinsky gave him every week for helping in the workshop to buy a unicorn, should one appear. Mr. Kandinsky was always busy on Sunday mornings, and he hardly noticed Joe leave. He was arguing with a customer who wanted a zip-fastener on his trousers, something to which Mr. Kandinsky could not agree.

Joe ran quickly through the crowd to the singing-bird end of the market. Alf was talking to a budgerigar and a tall thin man with a sad face. The bird wasn't replying, but every so often the thin man said, "It's no good, Alf—it's no good," till at last Alf put the cage down. Then the bird suddenly said, "Hullo, Joe." Joe said hullo back. The thin man looked sadder still and left, and Alf said, "Talks better English than I do—hullo Joe, what are you after? No more chicks now."

"Do you know where I can find a unicorn, Alf?" Joe asked.

"Try down by the dogs, Joe," he suggested. "Hullo Joe," the bird said again

"Hullo," Joe replied, and started towards the other end of the market. On the way Mrs. Quinn, the hen-woman, called him over.

"Joe," she said, "tell your mother I'll bring the eggs over meself tomorrow." She was holding a fat hen which squawked as an old woman pinched it and complained. "If you don't like the bird, leave it," shouted Mrs. Quinn in Yiddish.

"Do you know where I can buy a unicorn, Mrs. Quinn?" Joe asked.

"What do you want with heathen animals?" she answered. "Get yourself a nice day-old chick."

"That day-old-chick man, the louse," Joe said, "he should be put in a box."

"Will you leave the bird alone now?" screamed Mrs. Quinn at the old woman who was still pinching its bottom.

"There's no harm," Joe thought, "in at least having a look at the chicks."

"Another one already, cock?" asked the chick man.

"Not today, thank you," said Joe, "I'm not a born chick-raiser."

"You got to know the trick of it, cock."

"I'm going to buy a unicorn next time," Joe said.

"You do that," the man said, "you do." He bundled two dozen chicks into a box and tied it up with string.

Just about the middle of the market, near the herring-women, was the fritter stall which also sold hokey-pokey ices and sarsaparilla fancy drinks. The smell rushed up so thick from the great vat of frying oil that if you stood nearby for a while you had a whole meal of fritters.

The hokey-pokey man called out, "Get your hokey-pokey ice-cream," but Joe hurried on. He passed the cat-lady with her basket

of kittens mewing, and the long line of hutches where the rabbits were always eating. He waited for the bearded sandwich-board man to shout at him, " The wages of sin is death, repent lest ye perish," because he was studying to spit when he spoke. " Sthin—death," Joe spluttered.

The dog-sellers mostly stood in the gutter or against the bill-hoardings, holding a puppy in each hand and one in each pocket, and they didn't say anything unless you patted a pup. Then they told you he was a pedigree Irish retrieving elk-hound, his mother was a good house dog.

Joe walked right to the end of the dog-end of the market, hurrying past the men who bit off, exactly at the joint, dog's tails that needed lopping, to the very last man standing by the arches under the railway. The four sixpences and four pennies in his pocket clinked, and three men tried to sell him pedigree pups. But the last man stood by the dark opening of the arches without speaking. He held a large white rabbit under one arm, and in the other hand a piece of tattered string, and at the end of the string, a small unicorn.

While Joe looked at the unicorn, a little man with three pullovers on came up and took the white rabbit. He held it up by its ears, and it kicked its feet at him. Then he handed it back saying, " Flemish ? "

" Dutch," the last man said.

People pushed past with bags of fruit, and dogs and birds in cages, but none of them spoke to the man. Then a tall boy came up and stared at the white rabbit for a while.

" How much ? " he asked.

" Twelve and sixpence," the last man said. " It's Dutch."

" Give you half a bar," the boy replied.

" Done," said the last man and handed over the rabbit. The tall boy left, talking into the rabbit's ear. The last man pulled at the string on the unicorn as Joe came up to pat its head. The unicorn licked Joe's hand.

" He's a bit twisted," the man said to Joe, " but he'll grow straight in time."

" He is a bit twisted," Joe replied, looking at the unicorn's hind legs, " and one leg is shorter than the other at the back."

" He's a runt all right," the man said. " Still . . ."

" How much is he ? " Joe asked.

" Only five shillings," the man said.

" Give you two shillings," Joe said.

" Come orf it," the man said.

" He's a bit twisted," Joe said.

" What if he is a bit twisted ? " the man replied. " He'll grow."

" Give you two and fourpence," Joe said.

" Kids," the man said, " kids." He turned into the arches, the unicorn limping beside him, and Joe behind them both.

Under the arches the air smelt of smoke and horses. Old men with long beards and old women with feathers stuck in their hats, all wrapped up in rags, sat on sacks talking to themselves. At the end of

the arches the last man began to hurry, and the unicorn tripped and skipped after him.

When Joe caught up with him the man stopped and the unicorn sat down. " You still 'ere ? " the man asked. " Kids."

" What will you do with him ? " Joe said.

" Have him for dinner," the man said.

" Oh ! " Joe said.

" With a few onions," the man said.

" How much is he ? " Joe asked.

" How many more times ? " the man said. " Five shillings. He cost me that to raise."

" If you come back to see Mr. Kandinsky at Fashion Street," Joe said, " he'll give you five shillings."

" All that way ? "

" And I'll give you two and fourpence as well," Joe added.

" Give me the two and fourpence then," the man said, and Joe counted the coins into his hand.

" I don't mind taking him," Joe said, " if you're a bit tired."

As Joe came in leading the unicorn, Mr. Kandinsky was fixing the zip-fastener into the trousers because, after all, the customer is always right even when he's wrong. He was talking to the baker from the corner.

" Hullo, Joe," Mr. Kandinsky said, " what you got there ? "

" Crippled, ain't it ? " said the baker.

" It'll grow," the man said.

" Can you lend me five shillings to pay for this unicorn Mr. Kandinsky ? " Joe said.

" For a unicorn," said Mr. Kandinsky, reaching for the box he kept his change in, " five shillings is *tukke* cheap."

Later Mr. Kandinsky made a careful examination. " Clearly," he said, " this unicorn is without doubt a unicorn, Joe ; unmistakably it is a genuine unicorn, Shmule. It has only one small horn budding on its head."

" Let's see," said Shmule. Then after he looked and felt the horn bud he said, " Granted. Only one horn."

" Second and still important," continued Mr. Kandinsky, " Joe went to the market to buy a unicorn. That is so, Joe ? "

Joe nodded.

" Consequently," Mr. Kandinsky said excitedly, " it follows that he wouldn't buy something that wasn't a unicorn. In which case, he bought a unicorn, which is what this is."

" There's a lot in what you say," replied Shmule, " although it looks like a baby goat, a little bit crippled that's all, not like a horse which is, after all, a unicorn except for the horn."

" And this has a horn, yes or no ? " asked Mr. Kandinsky.

" Definitely," replied Shmule, " it has an undeveloped horn."

" One horn only ? " asked Mr. Kandinsky.

" *One* horn," agreed Shmule.

" So," concluded Mr. Kandinsky, " it's not a unicorn ? "

"What do I know?" said Shmule, shrugging his shoulders. The shrug reminded him of his shoulder muscles, so he went on flexing and unflexing them for a while.

Then Mr. Kandinsky sent Joe to buy a cabbage and some carrots. "And a couple of heads of lettuce as well," he added. "What he don't eat, we can put in the stew."

While Joe was gone Mr. Kandinsky examined the unicorn again, while Shmule practised a half-nelson on himself. As he ran his hand over the unicorn, Mr. Kandinsky sang: "One kid, one kid, which my father bought for two farthings." Shmule looked round.

"That's what I say," he said. "A kid."

"What harm will it do, Shmule," asked Mr. Kandinsky, "if we make it a unicorn? Poor little fellow," he added, "he really is crippled." And he sang: "*The angel of death came and slaughtered the slaughterer, Who slaughtered the kid that drank the water. One kid, one kid, which my father bought for two farthings.*"

All the excitement about the unicorn was one thing, but Shmule had his own troubles. Second, there was the dreaded Python Macklin, but first there was Sonia.

Sonia was the daughter of Hoffmann the butcher, and maybe plenty of meat was the reason why she was the strongest girl between Bow Church and the Aldgate Pump. She was four inches taller than Shmule, and she had only three muscles less than him, and those muscles, anyway, it didn't suit a girl to have. She could lift Shmule as easily as he could lift Joe, and though she had squinty eyes and a bad temper, she had a very good figure.

One day Mrs. Levenson, the corsetière, who did a bit of match-making occasionally, got him over to Hoffmann's for Friday-night supper, and somehow Shmule got himself engaged to Hoffmann's daughter Sonia. That was his number one trouble, for although a promise is all very well in its way, what is the use of being engaged if you haven't got a ring to prove it? And Sonia hadn't got a ring.

That ring. Sonia didn't forget it for a minute. In the evenings or at week-ends when they practised weight-lifting together and catch-as-catch-can, she never forgot. Shmule might say, "I pulled a muscle," —that's all. Just, "I pulled a muscle."

"You got a muscle?" Sonia would ask, insinuating. "Don't worry about me," Shmule would tell her, "I got enough muscles."

"I forget," Sonia would answer, lifting up the heavy bar, "it's diamonds you are a bit short of just now." Always on for a ring!

Do Sonia justice, the other girls in the blouse factory where she worked wouldn't let her forget. "Funny thing," Dora the blonde—blonde!—would say, "funny thing a fellow proposes but no ring. You sure, Sonia, he said *marry*?" And even worse. But she couldn't tell Shmule all that. The only thing to do was keep at him, because, give credit, a girl engaged is, after all, entitled to a ring. Say what you like, right is right!

Because of that ring Shmule went in for the wrestling.

Wrestling, he could win enough money to buy Sonia a large ring,

and then perhaps she would stop nagging him. " Why don't you just marry the girl straight away, and save yourself trouble ? " Mr. Kandinsky asked. " Surely, this is a practical solution ? "

" You think I haven't tried ? " said Shmule. " She won't let me come near her until she gets that ring."

But although Shmule had worries of his own, he helped Joe to build a house for the unicorn. They got four orange boxes and a hammer and some nails, and while Shmule knocked them together he told Joe that if you could win a title like Mr. World, or Mr. Universe, or Mr. Europe, you were made."

" So, how is the unicorn's house coming along, Joe ? " asked Mr. Kandinsky, peering through the steam from pressing. He wrinkled his nose, because after all these years he still didn't like the smell.

" Shmule is worried about that Sonia," answered Joe.

" Women," said Mr. Kandinsky. " But we can't do without 'em."

" You do," said Joe.

" I'm old," replied Mr. Kandinsky. " I have had my share of trouble," said Mr. Kandinsky, pressing hard with his iron, making a great cloud of steam. " The only thing I could do with, because all this bending over ironing gives me a creak in my back, is a Superheat Patent Steam Presser." Mr. Kandinsky leaned back from the bench. " You know Joe, with this patent steam presser all you got to do is open it—so. You put in your trousers—so. Close it—so. Press a handle. Pouf. Up comes the steam. Open. There is your trousers pressed. No smell, no consumption. Not like this, hot up the irons, press a bit, they get cold, wet the cloth, press a bit more, hot up the iron again, breaking your heart day after day."

Until the unicorn's own house was finished, he was living in the workshop, with a nest made up from odd pieces of material under a shelf. Joe fed him every morning and evening and left a bowl of water and milk for him to drink should he feel so inclined. Joe talked to the unicorn between meals so that he shouldn't feel lonely, but though he made quite a good breakfast, he didn't seem to care very much about anything. He just looked at Joe, and his eyes were sad as he slowly folded another lettuce leaf into his mouth with his pink tongue.

" I think," Joe told Mr. Kandinsky, " that this unicorn is missing his mother and father, but what can you do ? "

" What can you do ? " agreed Mr. Kandinsky.

" But where are they ? " asked Joe.

" In Africa, no doubt," said Mr. Kandinsky.

" But how did the baby get here ? " asked Joe.

" Who can say ? Maybe he was left here when the unicorns left."

" But by now he should be grown up," Joe said after a while.

Mr. Kandinsky thought for a time.

" He is not grown up," he said at last, " and you know why ? Because unicorns can't grow up on their own. They have to be told how by grown-up unicorns. Same as you have to be told by me,

otherwise how will you grow up? Same thing with unicorns, which are, after all, only human."

He took up his iron again, turned the flat of it towards his face, and spat lightly on it. There was no fizz. "These blankety irons," he said. "What I need is a Superheat Patent Presser."

That evening when Joe's mother came home from work, she asked first and foremost how the unicorn was. Joe said the house was nearly finished, but the unicorn didn't seem to care, and he told his mother what Mr. Kandinsky had said about why the unicorn happened to be there at all.

"I'm sure Mr. Kandinsky knows," Joe's mother said, "because he reads so many library books."

When Joe was in bed his mother kissed him and said good night, and was about to leave when he sat up.

"You know," Joe said, "Mr. Kandinsky wants a Superheat Patent Presser, and Shmule wants to be Mr. World, and Sonia wants the biggest ring in Gay-Day Blouses, and that unicorn wants its mother and father."

"And what do you want?" Joe's mother asked.

"I'm thinking what," Joe said. "What do you want?"

"Whatever you want," Joe's mother answered. Then she said good night again; the whole thing all over again; a cuddle with kisses, a cuddle without kisses, one big kiss, and a few little kisses.

They called the unicorn Africana, because Mr. Kandinsky said that was the name for everything to do with Africa. Straight away the unicorn began to look a little better. Everybody needs a name, otherwise how can they know who they are? And you couldn't call a unicorn Charlie or Hymie—or Kandinsky, even.

Every morning when he had finished his breakfast, Joe took Africana for a walk up Fashion Street, and then across the road and back again past the shirt factory. Africana wore a tartan lead and collar which had belonged to the baker's dog Nicolai, named after the Tsar of Russia.

On Africana's morning walks Joe introduced him to the neighbours. Their first call was the baker, who gave them a coconut biscuit each, and remarked on how Africana was growing.

"Do you really think he's growing?" Joe asked, because it seemed to him that Africana was no bigger than before.

"Growing?" said the baker. "I should say so. And he's walking better into the bargain. Fashion Street agrees with him. You want another biscuit?"

"No, thank you," Joe replied. But Africana didn't say anything. In fact, he didn't even finish his first biscuit.

Whenever it wasn't raining, even in the winter, Mrs. Abramowitz, who had a small fancy-button shop, used to sit by the open door on a bentwood chair watching people pass. Joe knew that Mrs. Abramowitz meant no harm, but he wished she wouldn't pinch his cheek as if it was a hen's bottom, because it made him feel as if he was going to be cooked, and also it hurt. Whenever she called out, "So,

my Joe, how is your Mummy ?" he tried to keep his cheeks out of her way. But it was difficult to talk to people without turning your cheeks.

Mrs. Abramowitz smelt of wintergreen ointment and camphor balls, and she wore a cardigan with fancy buttons on it.

The only one in the street Joe discussed Africana frankly with was Mavis, the girl in the greengrocery. Mavis was very interested in animals and had a money box in the shop for Our Dumb Friends, although she agreed with Joe that most animals could talk to one another. She was very helpful, and after a while Joe let her into the secret and told her that Africana was a unicorn.

He let her feel the one horn bud which was still very small, and asked her if it was rubbed with wintergreen, whether it would grow faster. Mavis didn't think it would, but she showed Joe how to brush Africana's coat, and always saved the best left-over greens for him and didn't charge. She said she was sorry she couldn't do anything about the limp, except ask Her Holy Mother to help.

Mr. Kandinsky thought it was nice of Mavis to go to the trouble, and besides, it might do some good. The unicorn did get a little bit better at walking, so Mavis was very helpful, although Shmule helped as well.

Shmule said to Joe, " Remediable exercise is the thing for that limp." And he massaged Africana every night for a week, using a little white oil. But even with Mavis and Shmule both working, you couldn't honestly say that Africana was growing much.

" Why should you worry if he grows or not, Joe ? " asked Mr. Kandinsky. " Take everything for what it is, don't try to improve it, Joe. A chicken is a chicken. A man is a man. A little unicorn is a little unicorn. It's enough." Because Mr. Kandinsky thought Joe expected too much sometimes.

Joe didn't answer. Mr. Kandinsky and Shmule were finishing off a big order, and they had to work overtime to make it pay, so that there was hardly enough time to eat, so naturally something had to be sacrificed, and of course, it was talking.

In times like this, Joe was very glad to have Africana's company, and when the weather was dry they played in the yard together, Joe in a muffler and overcoat, and Africana with a woollen coat on Mavis gave him.

Joe's favourite game was called Africa. In it he and Africana were in a jungle looking for a lost city. Africana was very big and strong and had an enormous solid ivory horn with silver bells on it, while Joe was tall and very brown and had a rifle and two pistols. He rode Africana through the jungle where they fought a lion, two tigers, a rogue elephant, a dreaded python two hundred feet long, and beat them all.

Africana defeated the elephant, and speared one of the tigers, while Joe shot the rest. Then they stopped under a big tree for a picnic dinner, and Africana had some greens while Joe brought his meat and potatoes into the yard to eat. After dinner they went on through the jungle, and down by the lavatory they suddenly saw the

lost city.

In the city everything shone with big diamonds and Joe put one in his pocket to take back for Shmule to give his girl, Sonia. The city was empty, although everything was neat and tidy as if his mother had just cleaned through, and in one of the houses was a large Superheat Patent Steam Presser which Joe put on one side for Mr. Kandinsky.

Joe and Africana walked down a long road paved with silver cobbles, and all the way along were stalls with singing birds and hens and hokey-pokey ice-cream and fritters and jellied eels, and you could take whatever you wanted. At the end of the road there was a huge palace like the Roxy Cinema in Whitechapel Road, shining with coloured lights.

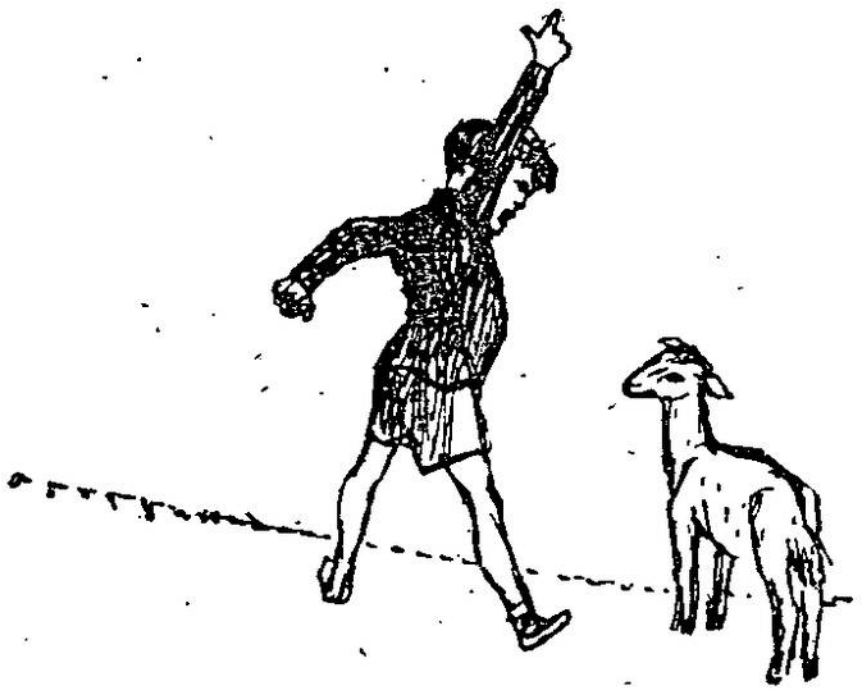
As they galloped up to the palace there was a great thunder of hoofs, and hundreds and hundreds of unicorns came galloping towards them. At the head of the unicorns was an enormous unicorn with a great golden horn studded with diamonds, and beside him a milk-white lady unicorn with a very kind face.

Africana shouted out to them, and they ran up to him and licked him all over, because they were his father and mother. On Africana's father's back—and this was the best of all—rode Joe's own father.

Then Joe and his father and Africana and his mother and father packed the diamond for Shmule and the Superheat Patent Steam Presser for Mr. Kandinsky, and they went back through Africa with all the unicorns following them, back, back, all the way back to Fashion Street.

And that was how Joe brought the unicorns back from Africa where they had been lost for all those years.

Joe and his Unicorn
reappear in next month's Argosy
in further intriguing adventures



SHIP AHOY !

Though pleased to see the dolphins play,
I mind my compass and my way

MATTHEW GREEN

I sing of the keen destroyer
Banging on the silken doors of the morning,
Cutting through the panels of the South Atlantic :
Strands of light streaming in the steel rigging.
And the warning :
The yellow stammer from the lighthouse of white sugar
Pales as the African sun unfolds her tail of golden peacock
Over the fevered harbour.

Borne on the lusty tide
Past mountains deep and green as Victorian postcards,
My iron mistress, my rusty virgin
Carries me into Sierra Leone, under the lion mountain :
The land of the violet lightning and the thunderstorms of sheet iron,
The hills, rich and bursting with the brown and orange of Gauguin.
And in the distance, the blue Sugar Loaf
Wears decently her conventional mists.

CHARLES CAUSLEY, *H.M.S. Eclipse Approaches Freetown*

Country Life

I hope I shall not be suspected of drawing a *longue beau* when I say that I was once in a big ship whose skipper was an ardent agriculturist. On my first visit to the poop I saw with much surprise a couple of cucumber frames lashed in secure positions, one on either side of the rail at the break of the poop. When I fancied myself unobserved, I lifted the top of one, and looked within, seeing that they contained a full allowance of rich black mould. And presently, peeping down the saloon skylight, I saw that carefully arranged along its sides, on brackets, were many large pots of flowering plants . . .

When we got to sea, and well clear of the land, so that the skipper's undivided attention could be given to his beloved hobby, there were great developments of it. For not content with growing lettuces, radishes, endive, and such " garden-sass " . . . he enlarged his borders and tried experiments in raising all sorts of queer seeds

of tropical fruits and vegetables. His garden took up so much room on the poop that the officers fretted a good deal at the circumscribed area of their domain, besides being considerably annoyed at having to cover up the frames, boxes &c., when bad weather caused salt spray to break over them . . .

In that humid atmosphere and equable temperature everything grew apace ; so that for a couple of months at a time green crisp leaves were scarcely absent from the table for a day . . . That was on the utilitarian side. On the experimental side he raised date-palms, coco-palms, banana-palms, mango trees, and orange trees . . . And all around in the skylight, beneath the brackets whereon the pots of geranium, fuchsia, &c. stood, hung orchids . . .

We went . . . to Hong-Kong, and there, as if in emulation of the " old man's " hobby for flowers, all hands went in for birds, mostly canaries . . . and when we departed for New Zealand there were at least 400 of the songsters on board. Truly for us the time of singing of birds had come. All day long that chorus went on, almost deafeningly, until we got used to it.

F. T. BULLEN *A Sack of Shakings*

Whither, O Splendid Ship . . .

My brigantine !
Just in thy mould and beauteous in thy form,
Gentle in roll and buoyant on the surge,
Light as the sea-fowl rocking in the storm,
In breeze and gale thy onward course we urge,
My water-queen !

JAMES FENIMORE COOPER, 1789–1851

Pleasure Trip

The ship which Your Majesty has designed would be the mightiest, the most terrible, and also the loveliest battleship ever seen. It would have a speed which has not yet been attained, its armour would surpass that of anything now afloat, its masts would be the highest in the world, its guns would outrange any others. And the inner appointments are so well arranged that for the whole crew, from the captain down to the cabin boy, it would be a real pleasure to sail in her.

This wonderful vessel has only one fault : if she were put into the water she would sink like a lump of lead.

BENEDETTO BRIN, *Italian designer, in a letter to Kaiser Wilhelm II*

Shipshape

Another point I would beg your particular attention to : piratical-looking caps, and shirt sleeves, with the accompaniment of long clay pipes, don't look nice on a neat well-ordered quarter-deck.

VANDERDECKEN, *The Yacht Sailor*, 1862

The White Swan

The ship. The White Swan. Tabitha turned round again, and suddenly she forgot the people all about her and no longer heard them singing. She was conscious of nothing at all except the ship. With all her eyes and heart and soul she looked at her, knowing that tomorrow she would not be there. She was the loveliest ship in all the world. She was a big ship, strong and powerful, yet perfectly proportioned, so lovely in line that she looked graceful as a willow wand, poised and eager for flight like a bird. Her oaken hull was soft in colour as a dove's breast, yet when the breeze gently stroked it rainbow colour rippled along the gleaming wood. The gold that sheathed the wood just below the water-line glowed warmly and made Tabitha think of two strong hands holding the ship. From her decks the great masts leaped up most gloriously, the shrouds and stays silver strands against the sky. Her sails were still furled, but one could see the sheen of them even now and guess at the beauty that would be unfolded when they flowered upon the masts . . .

Very soon now the tide would turn. The dog-shores were knocked away by the skilled men beneath the ship, and slowly, the spectators cheering madly, she began to move. Nothing went wrong. With smooth grace, gathering speed as she went, she slipped down to the river, curtsied to it and glided out upon it. She looked so lovely, rocking there upon the bright water, she looked the loveliest thing that had ever been made.

ELIZABETH GOUDGE, *The Valley of Song*

Ghost Ships

The sea knows no time and no era ; you cannot tell what century it is from the face of the sea. A Roman trireme suddenly rounding the white edge-line of chalk, borne on wind and oar from the Isle of Wight towards the grey castle at Pevensey (already old in olden days), would not seem strange. What wonder could surprise us coming from the wonderful sea?

RICHARD JEFFERIES, *Nature Near London*

MATCH FOR THE DEVIL

Look at the great fighting man being chased by a woman

by STUART CLOETE

PATRICK O'DONNELL was a big man. Six feet two or three when I met him, and he must have shrunk a bit with age by then. He was as wide as a house. And this is the story he told me. I am a collector of stories. It's my business. My living is my ears and the trick I have of writing down what I hear, and a bit more, too, for the story is in the parts that are not told by the teller, in the pauses that he leaves between his words, in the expression of his face, and the movements of his hands.

It's a hard thing for a man to speak of his loves and his hates, to rip out his guts for a stranger, and so the tale he tells, perfected by many tellings, is a fiction he's invented in which he's always a hero and the wrong has been done to, not by, him. Lies? No, they're not lies. They're the mantle he has thrown over the naked truth so it will no longer hurt him by its beauty or its terror. The realists have a word for it—"wishful thinking"—but to me it's just a curtain the teller lets fall between today and yesterday, just a blanket to keep himself warm, just a means, oft-times, to save his sanity.

The place, Cape Town—the bar of the International Hotel. The time—what does the time matter? But it was not just yesterday; for I was younger. Not caring for God or man. Somehow this story changed me and made me see things a different way. It was then I began to see the topsy-turviness of it all, the way men are torn this way and that, and the continuous conflict between God and the devil, with man as the battleground. That's what Pat was, a great big human battleground, his face and body scarred with the wars he'd suffered in the long years of his life.

I don't remember quite how the conversation began. With a cigar, I think. I smoke cigars, good ones, that you could buy in those days for a trifle. I think I offered the old man one, and a drink, too, no doubt.

But the rest I do remember.

"You're a big man," I said. "As big as a house."

"A house," he said. "I'm a castle of a man and a king by my

breeding. O'Donnell's the name, Patrick O'Donnell. An' though you've met plenty of Irishmen that said their ancestors were kings, mine *were*, and great ones, too, commanding legions, with beautiful women at their beck and call. Strong men they were, and that I got from them. An iron man I was, all iron and brass. Six foot four in my socks, and I could bend a poker the way you bend a lady's hairpin, and with the teeth in my mouth I could bite a six-inch nail in two. And my curse, it was like theirs, the kings of old."

"Tell me," I said.

"I'll tell you," he said. "I'll tell you how the devil came to me in those days and the long fight I had with him. Some rounds I won, some I lost—for you must remember," he added, "I'm only a man, and the devil has much experience. And sometimes in a fight it's experience that counts—footwork and knowledge of the ring.

"That's what the old devil has, my boy. He's got strength, but it's the tricks he's got that fool you, the thousand bags of tricks."

"You were a fighting man," I said. I knew he was, not only from the way he spoke, or because of his size, but because of the way he moved. Old as he was, he still moved on the balls of his feet like an ancient tomcat in an alley—light, careful, and fearless all at once. And I could tell by his cauliflower ear, and a twist in his nose where it had once been broken.

"Yes," he said, "I was, and a great one. But that was before you were born. Men made money out of me. And I made money, though not as much as they, for in those days a fighting man was just an animal, like a horse, and what does a race horse get for the races he wins? Fine oats and hay, and a cut from the whip and a prick of the spurs and maybe a sore mouth when they pull him."

"Sure," I said.

"Well," he said, "that's what I got." Then he went back to the devil again.

"The devil comes in many forms, Mister, which goes to show how clever he is. Three times he came to me in the form of a beautiful woman; each took what I'd made by my fights and left me. They came offering everything my money could buy in that market, and gave it, too. Everything but happiness. Once he came in the form of a little fat man who offered me everything money could buy if I'd throw a fight. That round I won. But he was always around.

"For some reason," he said, "the devil was after me. Perhaps because I was so big and easy for him to see. Perhaps because I was so strong, and my strength was my weakness—the place he could hit me below the belt, as it were—for the devil fights foul. The strength of a man and the beauty of a woman give him fine chances for that.

" Then he did his bottle trick. There's a devil in every bottle, Mister. Then he went back to his woman trick—one of his best for a young man. And there he was at the stage door of every music-hall hiding like a coward in the skirts of the girls. There sometimes he won and sometimes I did. A ding-dong battle that was, and I still show the scars of it.

" But don't run away with the idea that there was only the devil and me in this. No, Mister, there were angels, too. Angels were more common in those days, but even then they weren't too easy to see. Still had to look for 'em, as it were," he said.

" Angels," he said, " is God's agents on earth, and a queer lot they are. They come as kids standing on a street corner, as lost dogs looking for a home, as an old woman sometimes, or a young one. But the young ones are rare, because the devil generally gets at them first with his promises of things to come if they follow his directions.

" Yes," he said thoughtfully, " I think sometimes the devil gives girls their riding instructions the way a trainer does a jockey before a race, and that's why there're so many unhappy men in the world.

" But I was to find something out," he said. " I was to find out that a good woman has everything a bad one has and a bit more as well—her goodness. But you don't appreciate that when you're young."

Now this was all very fine, but there was no story. " The story," I said.

" The story ? " he repeated and put down his drink. " Didn't I tell you yet ? "

" No," I said.

Well (he began), it was in the summer on the diggings. I'd given up fighting then and come out here, Kimberley way. I had a claim, an' a wife, too. A very small woman, like a little toy queen she was. So small that I could stand her on my hand and raise her up, like you would a kitten. A small woman with the heart of a lion.

We were happy. It was as if the two of us were alone, though the diggings were crowded with men seeking fortunes in the yellow ground. Bad men most of them, but no trouble to us because of my great size. We lived in a tent, and water was scarce, but we were happy.

Lord, when I think of it, it seems to me there surely can't be anything as ugly as diamond diggings with tents and huts and derricks and cradles ; with cursing men and bad women. But if you've got the right woman, the place is nothing, and nothing it was to us. We were going to make our fortune and buy a little farm. For animals I love—there is no beastliness in them. They're the works of God

and the devil can't get into them so easily, because of their furry hides maybe, or some other thing that educated men may know about.

Anyway, there we were, and as happy as bugs in a rug, and all heaven in her blue eyes for me to see when I looked into them. Eyes as blue as a loch under a blue summer sky. The ripple of her love in them ruffled them like a summer breeze. Her hair was long and black as a blackbird and shiny as the flank of a well-groomed blood horse, and her cheeks were like apricots with a blush to them under the brown, and her lips like dark ripe cherries.

Man, I can't describe the small perfection of her. Perfectly made she was, like a big woman seen a long way off, like a good polo pony that's just a big chaser in miniature. If I was a painter I could paint you her picture. If I was a painter 'tis nothing else I'd paint, for surely there was never a more perfect woman.

We had no trouble, but there was a man—a big Dutchman near as big as me, and near as strong—that was always trailing his coat before me, trying to stir me into battle. But I wouldn't. Not me, not after I'd given up the game.

Killed a man. In Dublin, it was. A matched fight and a fair one, but his ticker wasn't what it ought to be, and I struck him so hard above it that it stopped. By heaven, I was a man then, with power in my arm. But that put an end to it.

It was legal enough, all fair, square, and above-board, but it rocked me. It rocked me back that, with a blow of me hand, I should kill a man of woman born, so I swore me an oath never to raise me hand again. And often the devil tried to make me, for there's nothing the devil hates like an oath. A man swears off wine, off women, off horses, and what does the devil do but try to make a man break his word to himself—for that gives the devil a duplicate key to his personality.

But he couldn't stir me, and many's the insult I've swallowed as a trout takes a worm, almost with pleasure, for each time 'twas a small victory against the devil that would have made my mother, God rest her soul, proud of me as she sat up above, looking down at her son.

This man, without me knowing it, once arranged a match between us, and a good purse was subscribed, for it would have been a battle of giants and worth while to watch.

When I refused, the poor dumb ox thought I was afraid. Me, an Irish king! But he was always about after that, before me or behind, making trouble—stirring it up as a child stirs the mud of a pond with a stick. He stole my Kaffirs away from me. He damaged my gear. He was a curse to me and mine, but fight I would not, and not because I was afraid.

Yes, I was afraid. Not of him, but of myself, for if I fought, the

hot blood of my heart would rise up in anger, and the thousand times I had refused to fight would come to the top of me like oil on a pail of water, and I'd destroy him.

That was my fear, and the fear of many a strong man before me, for a man's bile is a dangerous thing to tamper with—dangerous to all.

That was the only fly in our ointment, Mister. A big one, but the only one, for ours was a good little claim, and we were washing out some nice little sparklers—which annoyed this man even more, for I had everything : a good claim, a good and beautiful wife. And he had nothing—only this strength that he used on his woman, and on men less strong than himself. A bully was Louis van der Merwe, a bully and a braggart, but a power in the camp.

And so it went between us till one day when he passed while me and Mary was having an argument. Now, in these arguments Mary'd take a stick and belabour me with it, which did me no harm and did her a power of good, strengthening her arm and getting the wickedness out of her soul. An excitable young girl she was, nervous like a little blood horse, and the place was no place for a woman, with the dirt and flies and the hard ugliness of it all, for sure the only lovely things in the Pan were Mary herself and the diamonds we dug. Well, there she was belabouring me with all her heart and might when Van comes by with a friend of his, a man as bad as he, and they laughed to see it.

" Why," he said, " look at the great fighting man being chased by a woman. If she was mine," he said, " I'd soon take the hide off her with *sjambok*. Women and horses and dogs and Kaffirs," he said, " you got to break. Fight me ? " he went on, " why, no wonder you wouldn't dare, when you're frightened of a woman, and a little one at that—"

" Stop," I said to Mary, and at once she stopped.

" Say that again, you great baboon," I said. " Say it again, and I'll take the skin off your back to make a collar for me dog."

" Say it again," he said, " that I will, and in front of Cornelius as a witness." Then he called me a coward and my wife a bad name.

And that's where the devil came into the matter, for the devil naturally was on his side. He could say what he wished about me, but her . . . And that's what the devil had put into his mouth, the only word that'd make me break me oath. And that I did then and there, for there's nothing little about me. When I make big it's big, an' when I break, it's big, too.

I said, " Tonight, you baboon, I'll do it. Tell the boys. For a long time they've wanted to see it, and now they will. A battle of giants," I said. " No rounds, but we'll follow Queensberry rules, and

we'll fight till one of us can't stand up any more—and that'll be you.

" Men," I said, " I've fought before. Animals I have loved all me life, but now I'm going to fight something that's neither one nor the other but the worst of both, and I'll kill him."

He didn't look so happy then, but he took it and said, " Tonight, O'Donnell. Tonight I'll whip you an' take your woman from you and train her how to treat a man."

That was nearly the end of him for I snatched a pick handle that was lying loose and ready to my hand, but Mary held me back—her fingers as light as a feather, but on me wrist.

Now a great cloud descended on my spirit for I had betrayed myself, I had broken my word. With another I could have gone to him and told him of it. But a man cannot apologize to himself, cannot say he is sorry to himself, for himself is the one man he is without the power to forgive.

Nor was Mary a help, poor girl, for she said, " O'Donnell—" she called me that—" the man will kill you."

" That he will not," I said ; and then I knew that she did not know why he would not, for I had not told her of my fighting career that was destroyed like the shining bubble a child blows from the clay pipe, by the death of a man at my hands. My gloved hands, I thought, and here we would fight with bare fists, and I was more of a man than I had been then, stronger, and with greater weight to my body and more savagery in my heart. I tell you, then, I feared for myself, and the dark cloud of the storm descended lower over me.

In a great depression, I stopped the boys working. I stripped and I washed in water—so dear was it there on the diggings that it was like washing in liquid gold—and men came and stared at my great limbs bent over the bucket. At my chest like a barrel, and the muscles of my belly that were like iron bands, and those of my back that were like ropes, for the news had gone forth, and they were beginning to wager.

The bets were against me, for they argued that had I been a bold, strong fighter, it was fight I would have done long since, considering the provocation I'd had. It has always been my habit to cleanse myself before an event, and the water felt good on my skin and the sun felt good on it, and I flexed myself and sparred a bit to free my shoulders and my back. I hit some fine blows into the warm air. I danced back and forth on the red ground in my bare feet, gripping the dust with my toes. Then I went in and got out my trunks.

Mary said, " What's them ? "

I said, " My trunks, my fighting togs." I'd kept them all the years and had not worn them since that day.

" So you've fought before," she said.

" I have," I said.

And a great sorrow spread over her face, and the light that I loved went out of her eyes. "I fought clean," I said. "There's nothing to be ashamed of in being a fighting man."

"Not that," she said, "not that, but that you never told me. What else, O'Donnell, is there in your black life of which I am as ignorant as a child?"

"Nought," said I.

"No women?"

"There's women in all men's lives, but none so fair as you."

"My heart is broke," she said. "It's on the floor in little pieces and trodden in the dust."

"How would I love you as well as I do," I asked, "if I hadn't loved others before? Love," I said, "is an art and many must be loved before the light of the day is seen instead of the darkness in which men seek their way. You are light, my love," I said. "You are the dawn, the very life of me."

But this was no comfort to her, being young and inexperienced with men. She spoke no word to me, not one, not even when I left her and went with Maunders, who was a sort of camp captain, to the place where they had made a ring. I had a towel and a sponge under my arm, and my trunks in my hand. Black they were and black my hair and eyes, and black my heart. Black O'Donnell, they'd called me in those days—Black O'Donnell, the terror of the south.

The ring was levelled off and raked smooth. The ropes were mine cables lashed to rough poles. There were maybe a thousand men waiting, and a scattering of their lights of love in fancy, tawdry clothes. The sun was still pretty high in the sky, and we'd have time to make a long fight of it if we did not make a quick end.

Maunders said he'd referee, though there was not much to do since there were to be no rounds and Van said, "To hell with Queensberry rules. I don't know 'em. A fight's a fight, and we'll fight it rough and fast."

"Gouging and all?" I said.

"Sure," he said, "and it's a dead blind man that you'll be when I'm through."

"You don't know what you're saying," I said, and he didn't, because 'twas a rough fighter I was. I knew little of science. My fights had been won by a straight left, a right that could put my fist through a plank door, and a body that was made of brass and iron.

No man could take punishment like me. The more the better; all they ever did was to smash their own knuckles against the iron of me. And I'd been a wrestler before I took to the game, and could fight fair with the fair and foul with the foul.

We had no seconds, we had nothing—just the crowd wanting to see the red blood run, and Maunders to keep some sort of order. In the ring Maunders held a towel in front of me, because of the women in the throng, while I put on my togs.

There we stood, me and him. He was as big as me and as heavy, a big bearded baboon, but he was not as hard as me, and he didn't have a fighter's eyes. No, Mister, he had a bully's eyes. A fighter's eyes are like ice. Van's were hot and angry. My anger had gone long ago, and I was back to being a fighter.

Lord, it all came back—the smell of the crowd—the voices—the shouts. Partisans we had now, the Irish and even English backing me, and the Dutch bellowing for their boy. There were a couple of fights in the crowd before we'd begun even.

There was no shaking hands, there were no chairs to rest on, no seconds, no bottles of water. There was just me and him, and the crowd like wolves clamouring for flesh, for blood.

Maunders stood between us with a red handkerchief in his hand. "I'll say one—two—three," he said, "and then I'll drop the rag. When it falls, you start. From then on everything goes," he said; "no holds barred, and it ends when one of you's out cold."

He held up the red bandanna. He counted. One—two—three. A sigh like a wind across the plain went up from the crowd.

The handkerchief fell, and we jumped forward.

Now, in a fight like this, what counts is the first hold, so each of us was trying to get hold of the other and avoid being held ourselves.

We were also gauging each other for speed and style. He was a crouching fighter. He leaned forward with his arms out like the baboon he was. I fight standing up like a man. His position was a good one, but not with a man like me. Leaning forward like that, he was off balance, and in those days I could move like lightning. I moved about a bit and let him follow me. Like a crab he looked, and then suddenly I went in, got his left hand in mine, turned my back on him, and flung him over my shoulder.

Lord, he should have known that one. But his idea was to crush people, to get his arms round them and squeeze them, drive his knee into their groin, and then stamp on them when they were down. I knew his style, and before he was up I had him again. But he was clever. This time he fell on his back and threw me with a sort of scissors lock. Then he was on me, his thumbs in my eyes.

"I'll blind you," he said, "and I'll take that woman from you. And when I've had her a month you wouldn't know her, not even if you had eyes to see."

But his wasn't the only bag of tricks, and the devil was in me now. That's a strange thing, Mister, the way the devil changed sides and took advantage of Mary's name. My back was always my

strongest point and so was my suppleness. I arched under him, threw up my legs and got him round the neck with them, all with a buck, the way a wild horse might when first he's saddled.

Then I was out from under. And now I wanted to get my hands on him, which I did. He had me by the waist and was trying to throw me. But I had his throat in my hands. My right hand. I moved it to his chin, and my left hand was behind his neck.

"Take that back," I said, "or I'll break you in my hands."

"I take nothing back," he said.

He spat straight into my face.

'Twas then the devil had his chance, and he took it. "Who's he," asked the devil, "to spit in the eye of O'Donnell, the descendant of Irish kings? Where's the strength you spoke of? Shove, my boy," he said, "shove with your right and pull with your left."

And I did.

Man, there was not a sound except the crack of that man's spine. He sagged like a bag of mealies and lay crumpled at my feet. Dead as a doornail, he was. Fair it was, as fair as a foul fight can be, but my word was broken, so the devil had won the main event.

"What happened?" I asked.

"Nothing," Patrick O'Donnell said. "The fight was fair, and he'd have killed me if he could. There wasn't much law in those days up there. But I was a killer, of whom people were afraid.

"Even Mary shrank from me. She stayed by me, but in the end it killed her. Consumption, they said it was, but I knew better. It was the thought of what I'd done, and it was the devil's work. Because that's his game, Mister, to make you do wrong and then to make you pay. Van der Merwe was the devil's man, and the devil made me kill him. Then I was the devil's man, and he killed my Mary, the light of my life."

"And then—?"

"Then I was alone," he said. "I lived one way and another. Alone, with my great love gone, and only a great hate to take its place."

"Hate?" I asked.

"Yes, hate of the devil. From that day to this I've gone about trying to undo his work and telling men of the subtle ways he works. God's agent," he said, "another of 'em, and a queer lot we are, all with our great love of God and our great hatred of the devil."

* * *

When people agree with me I always feel that I must be wrong.

OSCAR WILDE

★*From the contemporary Russian poet and novelist, world-famed for his novel, "The Village," and winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature in* 1933, *Argosy presents a translation by Leo Gruliont of one of his masterly short stories.*

CALLING-CARDS

by IVAN BUNIN

IT was the beginning of autumn, and the river steamer, *Goncharov* coursed along an empty Volga. The chill of early morning enveloped the vessel, and an icy wind swept the Asiatic expanse of water and beat head on against the steamer. The wind whipped the flag at the stern, tore at the hats, caps, and clothing of the people walking the decks, wrinkled their faces and snapped at their sleeves and skirts.

A single gull followed the ship aimlessly and dully—now drifting just astern of the vessel, a sharp-pointed crescent swinging in the air, now soaring away slantwise, as if it did not know what to do with itself in the emptiness of the great river and grey autumn sky.

The steamer was almost empty, too. There was a small group of peasants on the lower deck and only three passengers on the upper. The three walked back and forth, meeting and passing: the two from the second class, both bound for the same destination, always inseparable, always pacing the deck together, constantly talking about something in a business-like manner, and alike inconspicuous; and the passenger from the first class.

The latter was a man of about thirty, a newly renowned writer, distinguished by his serious air—not quite sad and not quite angry—and also by his appearance. He was tall and robust—he even stooped a bit, as some strong people do—well dressed and, in his way, handsome, with the dark features of that Russian-eastern type one met among the old merchant families of Moscow. He came of such a family, although he no longer had anything in common with it.

He walked alone, with a firm step. In his checked English cap, black cheviot coat, and expensive, well-made shoes, he paced the deck, breathing deeply of the bracing air. He reached the stern and stood watching the running surge of river behind the vessel.

Then, turning sharply, he walked towards the prow once more, lowering his head against the wind that clutched at his cap, and

hearing the loud, regular pulsation of the paddle-wheel as each blade lifted to shed its glass-like cascade of rushing water.

A cheap black bonnet rose above the stairs that led from the third class, and he stopped short, smiling stiffly. Below the bonnet appeared the thin, sweet face of a young woman, his chance acquaintance of the previous evening.

He hastened towards her. She was also smiling as she came forward awkwardly, bent over to fight the wind and holding her bonnet in place with a bony hand. She wore a light coat and her legs below it were thin.

"Did you sleep well?" he asked loudly and cheerily as he approached her.

"Marvellously!" she replied, a shade too gaily. "I always sleep like a top."

He retained her hand in his large palm and looked into her eyes. She met his glance with radiant intensity.

"You overslept, my angel," he said familiarly. "Good folk should be at the breakfast table by now."

"I lay in bed dreaming!" she answered, with an animation quite out of keeping with her appearance.

"What were you dreaming of?"

"Just—things!"

"Oh, oh—watch out! Dreams can be dangerous," he said.

"Breakfasting is better. Let's have some vodka and fish soup," he added, thinking that she probably could not afford breakfast in the dining-saloon.

"Yes, vodka would be just right!" She stamped her feet. "It's devilish cold."

They set off for the first-class dining-saloon, walking briskly. She led the way and he, following behind, observed her almost greedily.

He had thought of her during the night. The previous evening he had struck up a conversation with her as the vessel approached a high black bank in the twilight. A scattering of lights shone at the foot of the dark shore.

Later he sat with her on the long bench which went all the way round the deck, beneath the white shutters of the first-class cabins. But they did not sit there long, and at night, alone, he regretted they had not lingered. That night he realized, to his surprise, that he wanted her. Why? Because of the customary attraction of a brief encounter with a chance travelling-companion?

Seated beside her in the dining-saloon, clinking glasses with her between mouthfuls of cold black caviare and hot white rolls, he knew now why she attracted him, and he waited impatiently for the

affair to reach its culmination. The fact that all this—the vodka, her uninhibited bearing—was in strange contradiction to her normal self excited him the more.

" Well, another drink, and enough ! " he said.

" It certainly will be enough ! " she replied, in the same bantering tone he employed. " Excellent vodka ! "

Of course, he had been touched by her confusion upon learning his name the previous evening. She had been astonished at thus unexpectedly meeting a well-known writer.

It was always pleasant to witness this confusion. It is usually enough to warm one towards any woman, if she is not absolutely ugly or stupid. Immediately a certain intimacy arises, one becomes daring in address, and somehow one feels a right to her. But it was not merely this that had stirred him : evidently he impressed her as a man, too—and he was touched by her very shabbiness and artlessness.

He already had acquired a lack of constraint with admirers : he knew how to make a light and rapid shift from the first few moments of acquaintance to a free and easy, pseudo-bohemian manner, and from that to the studied simplicity of the questions : Who are you ? Where are you from ? Married or not ?

Thus had he questioned her the previous evening as they watched the variegated lights of the forecastle reflected on the black water. The reflections stretched far out over the surface of the river. They could see the red glow of a bonfire on a river barge. " This scene is worth remembering," he thought. The smoke drifting up from the fire carried the smell of fish soup.

" May one ask your name ? " he had said.

She told him her name and surname quickly.

" Are you on your way home ? "

" I have been visiting my sister in Sviyazhk. Her husband died suddenly and—well, you understand—she was left in a terrible position . . ."

At first she was embarrassed and looked away, gazing into the distance. Then she began to answer more boldly.

" Are you married ? "

She smiled wryly. " Yes, I'm married—alas ! This is not my first year as a wife."

" Why alas ? "

" I was stupid enough to marry very young. One hardly has time to look about before life passes one by."

" It will be a long time before you need worry about life passing you by."

" Alas, not so long ! And I haven't seen anything of life yet."

" It isn't too late to start."

Here she suddenly nodded her head, smiling. " I'm starting ! "

" Who is your husband ? An official ? "

" Oh, he is a very good and kind man. But unfortunately not at all interesting . . . The secretary of our rural district court."

" How sweet she is, and how unhappy," he thought. He opened his cigarette-case. " Do you want a cigarette ? "

" Very much ! " She took a light bravely but clumsily, and then drew on the cigarette with quick, woman-like puffs.

Pity for her quivered within him—pity for her confusion, and tenderness ; and with all that, a sensuous desire to take advantage of her naïveté and inexperience. The inexperience, he felt, would surely be accompanied by extreme daring.

Now, seated in the dining-saloon, he glanced impatiently at her thin hands, her faded features that were all the more pathetic for being faded, and the dark hair, done up somewhat carelessly. After removing her bonnet she had slipped her grey coat off her shoulders and over the back of the chair, revealing a dark cotton dress. She kept tucking back stray strands of hair.

He was moved and stirred by the frankness with which she had spoken of her family life and her lost youth, and now her sudden boldness excited him ; she was saying and doing the very things that least became her.

The vodka brought colour to her face. Even her pale lips grew red, and her eyes took on a starry, merry brightness.

" You know," she said suddenly, " we were speaking of dreams. Do you know what my fondest dream was at school ? To have calling-cards. We were quite poor then. We had sold the last of the estate and moved to the city, and there was no one to call on anyway, but how I dreamed of having calling-cards ! It was so silly."

He pressed her hand, feeling all the bones through the gaunt flesh. Misunderstanding completely, she raised her hand to his lips like an experienced coquette and gave him a languorous glance.

" Let's go to my cabin."

" Let's. It's so stuffy here, with all this smoke."

Tossing her head, she reached for her bonnet.

In the corridor he embraced her. She glanced back at him over her shoulder, proudly and ecstatically. He almost bit her cheek out of the hatred that comes with passion and love. Over her shoulder she presented her lips voluptuously.

In the cabin, hastening to please him and to take full and audacious advantage of the unexpected happiness that had suddenly fallen to her lot in the person of this strong, handsome, and famous man, she tugged at the buttons of her dress and stepped out of it, letting it fall to the floor. She remained in her light petticoat and

white knickers, her shoulders and arms bare; and in the half light that entered the cabin through the shutters she was slender as a boy. The poignant naïveté of it all pierced him.

"Shall I take everything off?" she whispered, like a young girl.

"Everything, everything," he said, growing sadder and sadder.

Obediently and swiftly she stepped out of her underclothes and stood naked, her flesh grey-purple with that peculiarity of the female body when it shivers nervously and the skin becomes taut and transparent and is covered with goose-pimples. She stood there in only cheap stockings, worn garters, and cheap black shoes, and she gave him a triumphant, drunken glance as she reached back to remove her hairpins. Chilling, he watched her.

Her figure was better and younger than one might have thought. Her collar-bone and ribs were clearly outlined, as might have been expected from her pinched face and bony shins. But her thighs were large. Her belly was flat, with a small, deep navel, and the curving triangle of dark, beautiful hair below the belly conformed to the thick mass of hair on her head.

She bent over to pull up her slipping stockings; her little breasts, with their cold, shrivelled brown nipples, hung like small pears, charming in their meagreness. He forced her to experience the extreme of shamelessness, so unbecoming to her and therefore exciting to him, rousing all his pity, tenderness, and passion . . .

Nothing could be seen through the slats of the shutter, but she kept glancing towards the shutter in rapturous fright, hearing the unconcerned voices and steps of people passing on the deck outside the window; and this exaggerated still more his terrible exultation at her depravity. Oh, how close these people stood talking and moving—and none of them would imagine what was going on in this white cabin, only one step away!

Afterwards he placed her on the bunk. She lay as if dead, her teeth clenched, her eyes closed, and a sad sense of peace settling on her now pale and quite youthful features.

Towards evening, when the steamer docked at the town where she was to land, she stood alongside him, silent, with lowered lashes. He kissed her cold hand with that love that remains somewhere in the heart for all one's life, and she, without looking back, ran down the gangway into the rude, jostling crowd on the dock.

* * *

A judge is a law student who marks his own examination papers.

H. L. MENCKEN

SCHOOL FOR DANGER

by MICHAEL GILBERT

★

As the last part of this exciting novel opens, Mr. Wetherall, head of South Borough High School, is on the trail of that master crook, organizer of the black market, who—like a hidden, venomous spider—is responsible for the threatening web of dangers in which Mr. Wetherall is entrapped.

Wetherall understands now the intimidation that has terrorized Luigi, proprietor of his favourite restaurant. He realizes why food-racket investigator, Sergeant Patsy Donovan (brother of his secretary, Peggy), refused to tell the police who smashed up his home and murdered his pretty wife. Donovan is now a prisoner in his mother's house, in danger of his life from the food-gang (and in disgrace with the police).

Mr. Wetherall had discovered Jock's Pull-In (a receiving centre), and also the Double Four, a dubious Soho pub, owned by a strange character called Annie. He had been followed and beaten up by two men, but, at an identity parade, no one had dared to pick out his attackers, Sailor Jackson and Red Whittaker.

Hearing of Wetherall's adventures, Duncan Robarts, famous editor of the Kite, *told his sub-editor Todd to keep an unofficial eye on the whole business. Wetherall gives Todd vital information, from his ex-pupil Peter Crowdy, concerning the re-labelling racket at Crossways Goods Depot which has resulted in wholesale thefts—and in the murder by black-market thugs of Crowdy's father, a sorter at Crossways.*

Todd suspects Annie is receiving black-market money and passing it to Hollomans Cures Ltd. Young Sammy Donovan, the Sergeant's brother, gets taken on at Hollomans, learns the quack-medicine racket, and opens Mr. Holloman's safe, finding vast sums in notes. Holloman catches Sammy red-handed and, threatening to kill him, imprisons him in a store-room.

Chief Superintendent Hazlerigg explains to Wetherall the Yard's plan to use Sergeant Donovan as a decoy, by letting him into the secret of the gang's central store. Donovan will set off there and the police will arrest the gang as they attack the Sergeant. Wetherall learns from Donovan that the police information is out of date. Under cover of the fog, the Sergeant sets out alone for the new store—a St. Pancras factory. Wetherall warns the police to make for the gang's new hide-out and try to save Donovan.

★

BEFORE MR. WETHERALL had finished speaking, Hazlerigg, on a second telephone, was asking for the Deputy Divisional Inspector, E Division, adding, "Then I want Operations. And send Duffy up here. Please be as quick as you can."

A buzzer sounded.

Hazlerigg said, "Operations. Will you get three crews moved out into the St. Pancras area? I can't tell you exactly where they're to go, because I don't know myself, yet. And see if you can get one of the cars with an L Division man in it. It may be useful to have someone who can spot Sergeant Donovan. Donovan. Yes, that's the chap. Tell me as soon as the cars are standing by."

And, to a red-faced giant who came into the room a few minutes later, "Good evening, Duffy. I want to use your local knowledge. They say you know the St. Pancras district backwards."

Sergeant Duffy grinned. "I've pressed every inch of it with my flat feet," he said.

"I want to find a paint factory. It's been described as being 'near St. Pancras.' I expect it may be a disused factory—or maybe partly-used."

"You mean the ground floor a paint factory and the floors above it vacant?"

"That's exactly the sort of thing."

"It's not all that easy, sir. You won't find anything big in that area at all. But there's quite a few little places. Places which mix up paint for builders—mostly cheap sorts of white paint and undercoat. A few of them make varnish and stain. Then there's one or two places that store paint. Regular old death-traps. You remember, sir, we tried to get 'em all under licence, but it didn't come off."

"I think he said *factory*, not store."

"Hm. Well, the best thing I can do is fetch you a street map and show you the ones I can remember."

At that moment the DDI of E Division came up on the telephone, and Hazlerigg told him what he wanted.

"I've got Duffy here," he said. "Picking out likely places for us. I want you to check up on any addresses he gives us. It's pretty urgent."

The DDI said something.

"I agree," said Hazlerigg. "We could do without the fog."

Ratcliff Lane was a cul-de-sac, and correspondingly easy to watch. Sergeant Donovan was, of course, aware of this, but he also knew that the sort of men Whittaker would be likely to use would be bad, unenthusiastic players, without either the patience or the stamina for a long game.

On a night like this, anyone told to watch the end of the Lane was more than likely behind a pint pot in the nearest saloon bar.

Nevertheless, he went carefully, moving quite silently on his rubber-soled shoes, keeping to the middle of the road. After a few right and left turns, he breathed more freely.

He was approaching the Walworth Road. The great overhead lamps blazed down, each shedding its cone of milky, drifting light, hindering more than helping the traffic, which was here wedged in a tight, blaspheming line from the corner of Albany Road right up to Blackfriars Bridge.

Happy in his obscurity, the Sergeant padded along the pavement, and made his way to the entrance of the Walworth Road Tube Station. He took a ticket for King's Cross.

Had he realized it, he had taken all his precautions at the wrong place. The net that had been spread for him was of an altogether different kind, broader-meshed, more carelessly flung, and therefore more difficult to evade.

Even as he moved to the head of the escalator, a newspaper vendor, with one leg and one wooden stump, hauled himself off the upturned crate on which he was perched beside the booking-office, and stumped across to the line of telephone kiosks inside the station entrance.

He knew Sergeant Donovan by sight. He had also heard the whisper that had gone round. He had no idea what it was all about, except that there could be something in it for him.

He dialled a number, introduced himself as Len, and, after some delay, spoke to a man called Ted. From the background of shouts, screams, and rifle shots, one might have supposed that Ted was on active service in a noisy sector of the front. (In fact, he was proprietor of an amusement arcade.) Ted sounded non-committal, but thanked Len for his trouble.

Len returned to his evening papers, full of the particular satisfaction that comes from having kicked someone who cannot possibly kick you back.

Sergeant Donovan was by this time boarding his train. It was not full. As he sat down in an empty seat at the far end of the carriage, he was careful to arrange his raincoat on either side of him so that what was in the pockets rested squarely on the seat.

At King's Cross he got off the train and climbed up and out into the fog again. Chaos reigned at the crossing of the five roads outside that station. At the centre of a tangle of traffic two lorries stood, headlight to headlight, like two intractable cats endeavouring to outstare each other. Up the road, lights were flicking on and off. Horns were sounding.

The Sergeant grinned. He might have grinned even harder, had he known that no fewer than three police cars were locked in the confusion. He took a quick look around him. It was an empty precaution, for his nearest neighbours were dim ghosts. Then he plunged into a side street.

Away from the lights it was a little easier to see. He was now entering the peculiar area that is the hinterland of the great terminal stations. An area of tiny streets flanked by high walls ; streets that often end abruptly where the great rail arteries cut across them ; an area of little squalid shops, ramshackle garages, and dangerous eating-places ; a place of steam and soot and frustration.

The Sergeant made his way forward with some confidence. He had served his apprenticeship in E Division. At one point he unlatched a wooden gate, passed under a tunnel lined with dripping tiles, went down a flight of ironshod steps, squeezed through a narrow opening, and came out into an alley beyond. Here his pace became slower. He knew that he was very near his objective. The white fog blanketed all sound. He might have been alone in the world.

He was feeling with his fingers along a wall made of up-ended railway sleepers. Twenty yards along he found a gate. It was shut and padlocked. He tested the padlock thoughtfully and decided it was beyond him. There was a tricky moment as he balanced on the gate, straddling the barbed wire, to reverse his grip. Then he dropped quietly down into the obscurity of the other side.

He was in a cinder-covered yard. Ahead of him loomed the building. It was a two-storeyed affair of brick, which had once been yellow and was now the colour of slow death.

The Sergeant felt his way round to the right, turned a corner to the left, and was stopped by a high boundary wall. Then he turned about and reversed the process, coming back to the same wall, or a continuation of it. He had an idea that behind this wall must lie the canal.

After that he turned his attention to the ground-floor windows. They were small and steel-framed. After a moment's hesitation he took out a handkerchief, wrapped it tightly round his bunched fingers, and knocked in a pane of glass.

The noise seemed to die in the fog.

Carefully, he pushed his hand in and undid the catch.

"Curse the fog," said Hazlerigg mildly.

"That's all the paint factories and all the stores," said Duffy. "They seem to be O.K. Unless it's a lot further from St. Pancras than we think."

"Over a sort of paint factory near St. Pancras," repeated Hazlerigg. He stared out of the window at the drifting curtain. It was yellowing now, as the grime of London settled upon it.

Suddenly, Duffy made the noise of one who has had an inspiration, and said, "Quigleys!"

"What's that?"

"You couldn't really call it paint. They make some paint. Chiefly it's boat varnish and printer's ink."

"Where is it?"

Duffy pointed down at the map on the table.

"That's in St. Pancras, all right," said Hazlerigg. "Backing on the canal."

"What made me think of it," said Duffy, "was that I remembered that Quigleys never used more than the ground floor. It was an old building they took over. Too big for them, you see. In my day the top storey was used for hides."

"Could be what we want," said Hazlerigg.

He got on to the DDI.

"I'll send a man just as soon as I have one," said that harassed official. "They're all out in the fog now."

Hazlerigg rang off and tried Operations.

"I'll chance sending a car straight there," he said to Duffy. "I've got a hunch about this."

The Junior Inspector in charge of the Operations Room reported back a minute later. "I've given the order," he said. "It may take a little time to carry out. I'm told there's a sort of private hell going on at King's Cross."

The room Sergeant Donovan was in was full of varnish. The darkness was full of it, a sweet, sickly, resinous smell. Without using his torch, he picked his way to the door and found it unlocked.

From the hallway a flight of shallow wooden stairs ran up, with one turn, to the first-storey landing. Here there was another door, which was locked. There was a white card tacked to it, but the printed name was so grimy that it was illegible.

The door was old and ill-fitting, and the lock was a catch lock. He produced from his top pocket a flattened cone of stiff talc and inserted the small end between the jamb and the door edge. A gentle pressure, and he felt the tongue of the lock give way. The door

opened inwards. There was a further short passage with partitioned rooms on either side, and beyond that a very large store-room.

This was full of stuff. Most of it was in crates and cartons, but some was spilled out on benches and tables. Sergeant Donovan, picking his way among the jumble, used his torch more freely. A wooden box with the label of a well-known whisky distillery caught his eye, and he bent to inspect it. As he did so he heard the sounds that told him he was not alone.

Someone was coming up the stairs ; worse than that, there were people inside the room already, near the door.

There was very little time to do anything. He jumped towards the ladder that his torch had shown him at that end of the room, and went up it. It was a short ladder, four or five steps, leading up to a sort of loading platform, with crates on it. He had no hope of hiding. He just wanted to get his back to something solid.

The platform ended in double doors, which were shut and barred. He turned with a grunt of satisfaction. He could hear men below him moving in the darkness.

Then all the lights went on.

Some of the fog had got into the room and hung in shreds round the overhead lamps, but there was plenty of light for Sergeant Donovan to see his pursuers. There were five of them, all looking up at him with the bleak, intent look of a pack of hounds who have had a long run but are close on a kill.

He knew every one of them.

There was Guardsman, with his scrubbed cheeks, his immature nose, and knowing eyes. Beside him, like a banner, the red mop of big Whittaker, and Sailor Jackson with his black hair, white face, and dead eyes. Behind them stood the coffee-coloured boy from Jamaica. His face alone had a sort of excitement in it, out of keeping with the solemnity of the others. The ex-boxer Prince was the fifth. He had just come through the door. As the lights came on, he shut it behind him and came forward, blinking his single, puffy eye in the sudden glare.

As they closed on the platform Sergeant Donovan, instead of retreating; came forward to meet them. He put his foot out and kicked the ladder away. It fell to the floor with a noise that emphasized the silence.

Without a word, Jackson stooped to pick the ladder up.

" I wouldn't do that," said Sergeant Donovan.

He had taken his right hand out of his pocket and was holding something lightly and lovingly in it.

All movement in the room ceased.

" It's powerful stuff," said Sergeant Donovan. " Makes the old Mills grenade look like a penny cracker. Incendiary too, as well as explosive. And whilst we're talking about fires, I hope you've none of you forgotten what you're standing on top of. Did you ever watch varnish burn ? All right, Whittaker, I can see you've got a gun. What good do you think it's going to do you ? The pin's out. Take a

look. No deception. It's a short fuse, too. I've only got to open my fingers, and there'll be just three seconds between you and the bonfire."

He spoke slowly, relishing his words.

"You weren't thinking of going, were you, Prince?"

Four heads jerked round. Prince had taken a few furtive steps back towards the door.

"I could toss this beauty right into your lap from here. Like to see if you can catch it? I've got another with me in case you miss. Three seconds should be plenty. That's right. Back you come. All nice and cosy."

"Look here," said Whittaker. He seemed to be the only one who had a voice. "We don't want any trouble. You clear out, and we'll let you go. Is that right?" He looked quickly at the others. There was a murmur of agreement from everyone except Jackson, whose hungry eyes had never left the man on the platform.

"May I take that as a firm offer?" said Sergeant Donovan, coming a further step forward, to the very edge of the platform. "How very generous! Perhaps you'd care to put it in writing? Or get down on your knees and sing it? You big yellow gas-bags! Take a look at yourselves. You're frightened. I can see the guts running out of you like rain. Perhaps you're thinking you can talk yourselves out of this one. Or buy yourselves out. I haven't heard any mention of money yet. Nothing to say, Guardsman? You're not on parade now. What about you, you little brown bastard? You're not dealing with a woman this time. Do you understand enough English for that? You've come to the wrong party. There's no woman here to be tied up, and gagged, and suffocated."

The strong light shone down, picking out the lines on Sergeant Donovan's scarred face.

"Did you think," he said at last, almost conversationally, "that I was really going to let any of you go?"

It was not in Sammy's nature to sit still for long. Anyway, the cold forced him to move.

He had heard Mr. Holloman return some time before, and all thought of shouting for help had drained out of him. He had no desire to lie in that cold, damp place, his limbs twisted grotesquely behind him, hardening gradually into a knot that no one could untie.

One blessing, the electric light worked. He was not in darkness. He started by examining all the jars on the shelves and sniffing the contents. He had once seen a film about a man who had been locked up in a store-room by an enemy agent and who had discovered some sticks of gelignite.

It was while he was up at the far end of the store-room that he heard the voices. They were odd voices; so distant, so clear, so disembodied, that they might have been sounding inside his own head!

"Bleak," said the first voice. "Bleak is the word I should use. It's not the sort of climate that suits everyone. Take my sister. The one who went to live at Westcliff."

The second voice was deeper. Possibly it was a man's voice, if disembodied spirits differentiated between man and woman. " When he goes away," said the second voice, " do you think he makes any arrangements ? He's the only one who's allowed to sign for the petty cash. You'd imagine he'd sign a cheque before he went. ' What do you expect me to do, Mr. Stanley,' I said, ' raise a loan from the bank every time I want to go to the lavatory ? ' "

Sammy was entranced. There were lesser voices, too—voices which said things like " There now," and " Well, fancy that, so did mine ! "—but the two leading voices overrode them.

Sammy took another look at the end wall. There was no window but, as he saw now, there were two ventilators, one in each corner. It was undeniably through these holes that the voices were coming into the room. More, when Sammy stood on a stool and applied his ear to the vents it appeared that the man's voice was coming through one and the woman's voice through the other. It was because he had been standing in the middle that he had picked them both up.

Wireless ? Neither of them sounded like any programme he had ever listened to. Then was he hearing, by some trick of sound, people talking in the houses on either side ?

Sammy set himself to consider the lay-out of No. 5 Strudwick Road.

The cupboard he was in occupied the space between the dining-room and the kitchen. The house was semi-detached—its other half-section, No. 7, lying beyond the dining-room. Therefore, while the voice from the right-hand ventilator could, by a fluke of construction, be coming from No. 7, by-passing the dining-room, as regards the left-hand one any such explanation was impossible. There was the width of a garden between him and No. 3.

There was no back garden in the proper sense of the word, it was all at the front and at the side. In other words, thought Sammy, his mind suddenly springing to attention, the wall he was listening at formed part of the outer wall of the house. Take it away, and you would step straight out on the pavement of Mutlow Terrace. Even so, the problem remained. For why, in heaven's name, should two groups of people be standing, on a night like this, some three yards apart from each other, discussing general topics with the idle persistence of people who had a night to kill ?

As he put the question the whole glorious answer presented itself.

There was only one sort of person who would stand through the night in any weather (the worse the weather the more persistently they would stand). Sammy could see it as clearly as if the wall had suddenly rolled up, like the curtain at a theatre. The whole road must be full of the supporters of the Elephants' Football Club, waiting for the morrow and Manchester United.

As the truth dawned on him, Sammy's heart began to thump. Thousands of potential allies, separated from him by less than twelve inches of brickwork.

He sat down and thought furiously.

The obvious thing to do was to shout or whistle or poke something

through the hole. Anything to attract the attention of the crowd. Perhaps he might write out a message. The shelves were lined with paper. He had no pencil but there might be something in one of the jars he could dip his finger into, or he could write in his own blood.

But even as he thought of them, Sammy could see only too clearly the weakness of all these ideas. He knew what would happen.

If he succeeded in attracting someone's attention, and *if* that someone was sufficiently interested to do anything about it, he would come round to Mr. Holloman's front door and ask what it was all about. And ten to one, the man would be satisfied and would go away, and then Mr. Holloman would come along to Sammy and—Sammy's arms and legs already ached in anticipation.

Dare he risk it? On the other hand, dare he not risk it? Mr. Holloman had already tried to kill him once!

Then quite suddenly, the plan was there, fully formed! With fingers that trembled in spite of himself, Sammy pulled off one of the pieces of stiff white paper that lined the shelves, and rolled it into a thin tube. Then he cast his eye round for the jar he wanted.

Mr. Jeffery was a keen supporter of the Elephants, and, like all their keenest supporters, was a fanatic. He took a perverse pride in the sufferings he endured.

A bit of fog was nothing. The braziers were alight, and voluntary helpers with cans of tea were passing up and down the queue. Taking a deep breath, Mr. Jeffery had just said, "We must be clear in our definition of free will—" when he felt it. It was no more than a breath of gritty air on the back of his neck.

It came again.

Mr. Jeffery took out his handkerchief and rubbed his neck. Almost at once the most alarming symptoms developed.

"Just as if it was on fire," he said afterwards. A burning, irritating, itching torment! He must have called out, because the next thing was that his wife had struck a match and was examining him anxiously.

"I do believe you've got scarlet fever," she said.

"Nonsense!" said Mr. Jeffery. "I had scarlet fever when I was four. Ouch! Don't touch it, whatever you do."

"If you'd allow me," said their neighbour in the queue, a pleasant young man, to whom they had already spoken, "I'm a medical student." A third spectator produced a torch. The young man took a long look and was about to pronounce the word "Urticaria" (which would have been the first, though not the last, incorrect diagnosis of his professional career) when another voice in the crowd said, "Here it comes, whatever it is."

Sure enough, plainly visible in the light of the torch, its passage marked by the disturbance of the fog vapour, a jet of *something* was originating from a hole in the brickwork beside them.

The medical student who was holding the torch exclaimed and pointed to the back of his own wrist.

On it were spots of brown powder.

Handing the torch to Mr. Jeffery, he drew a clean handkerchief from his pocket and wiped the powder carefully away. The back of his hand was already beginning to look inflamed. He turned to Mr. Jeffery with a grin. "It's nothing to worry about," he said. "You know what it is? Some joker's blowing itching powder at us through that hole in the wall."

"Blowing what?"

"Itching powder. That's the popular name. It's quite harmless. It's a sort of powdered berry."

"I don't care what sort of powdered berry it is," said Mr. Jeffery stiffly. "He's not going to blow it over me."

The sentiment of the crowd was with him there. It was felt that the dignity of the Elephants was at stake.

A large man in tweeds, who had been fortifying himself from a hip flask, suggested sending a little deputation round to sort the joker out. This suggestion found favour.

"There's a policeman at the corner," said the medical student. "He'd better come along as well."

Accordingly, when, in answer to a loud and persistent ringing at his door-bell, Mr. Holloman came to the door, he found no fewer than four men on his step, one of them a police constable.

Mr. Jeffery outlined the case for the prosecution.

"Oh dear," said Mr. Holloman. "Oh dear, yes, I'm afraid that must be my boy Sammy. Such a mischievous child! I'll certainly see he doesn't get away with this."

"Well then, gentlemen," said the policeman pacifically, "if Mr.—?"

"Holloman, Officer."

"If Mr. Holloman promises to deal with the boy . . ."

"Hm," said Mr. Jeffery.

"I don't believe there is a boy," said the man in tweeds suddenly. "He's got a narsty, shifty sort of face. He did it himself."

"Really!" said Mr. Holloman angrily, "I can assure you—"

"Let's see the boy," said the man in tweeds, "I'll believe'm when I see'm."

"We should like to *see* the boy," said Mr. Jeffery.

"Come now, sir," said the policeman. "Just produce the boy and the gentlemen will be satisfied."

"I'll be satisfied when I've seen him given a darned good walloping," said the man in tweeds.

After embracing the opposition with a calculating look, Mr. Holloman stalked down the passage, turned the key in the store-room lock, and jerked the door open. Sammy who was crouching ready just inside, came with it like a bullet.

Mr. Holloman grabbed, and caught a handful of red hair. There was a moment of tension, but the hair was well rooted. Sammy slid to a halt with a squeak.

Mr. Holloman transferred his grip to the boy's sleeve, had time

to mutter, " Just you remember what I told yar," and then dragged him back towards the front door.

" Well, now, gentlemen," he said smoothly, " here he is. As a matter of fact, I'd locked him in as a punishment for something he did earlier this evening. I never imagined he'd be up to more tricks."

Everybody looked at Sammy, who was perfectly silent.

" What have you got to say for yourself ? " asked the policeman.

" Speak up, boy," said Mr. Holloman, " and tell the gentlemen you're sorry."

" He'd be a lot more sorry if I had my way," said the man in tweeds.

Still Sammy said nothing. Nothing that he could say was going to be of any use. His fear had reached a point where Mr. Holloman seemed more than human. In a match of bluff, the older man had all the weapons.

With sudden determination, he swung out his left foot and kicked Mr. Holloman as hard as he could on the ankle. Mr. Holloman swore and loosened his grip for a second. Sammy dived between the medical student and Mr. Jeffery, handed off the man in tweeds, wriggled under the policeman's arm, and disappeared down the front path into the fog. If the gate had been latched he would have been caught, but it opened to his touch.

He scudded off down Strudwick Road with the pursuit hard behind him.

Even as he ran he realized that his hope of safety lay in avoiding the main road. Among lights and people the shouts of his pursuers would quickly lead to his recapture. The fog both helped and hindered him. He turned right at the bottom of the road, and right again. He could still hear the steps of more than one pursuer. At the end of the road there was a choice of ways, and he took the right once more. Quite suddenly he realized that he was in a cul-de-sac.

Ahead of him a brick wall blocked the way.

Without pausing to think, he jumped up on the nearest garden wall, felt for the top of the high wall, and pulled himself up onto it.

Next moment, he was over and hanging by his hands. Then he let go.

It was a good deal further down than it had been up. He hit a steep bank, rolled down it fast, and came to rest on something hard.

As he lay there winded he heard, away to his left, in the fog, a sharp crack. " Shooting," he said to himself. " That's the limit. They've started shooting now."

At that moment the ground on which he was lying started to vibrate to a slow rhythm, and he felt that he was near a heavy moving body. Then, out of the darkness not three feet away, a tall shape passed, ringing and thudding. The red glow of a banked fire. The hiss of escaping steam. The smell of hot oil. Then, further off, the report of a second fog signal and he was alone again in the darkness.

The realization that he was lying actually on one of the tracks of a

main railway line dawned slowly. Then he got to his feet and started shakily across.

It was not until he had gone too far to turn back that the dangers of what he was doing occurred to him.

The width of the track seemed endless. It would be the main north line into London. Was any of it electrified? Sammy thought not, but he slowed down still further, lifting his feet carefully over successive rails. As he crept across, great engines seemed to be moving quietly in the fog to destroy him.

He lost count of the rails he had crossed, when suddenly there was another wall in front of him. A low one, this time. He dragged himself over it on to grass, took one step forward, was slipping, and was up to his shoulders in water.

After that railway, a canal was nothing. Sammy struck out with the confidence of one who has swum from before he could remember. Then he was climbing out on cinders. It felt like a towing-path. If he followed it he must come to a gate.

He shook himself and started out. A few minutes later he saw something. First it was a faint lightening of the darkness. Then a glow, like the early-morning sun coming up through mist. Then, still veiled behind the curtain of the mist, a belching of red and orange and flame.

There was a big building on fire, and it was not far ahead of him.

He broke into a trot.

UNEXPECTED VISITORS

When Mr. Wetherall got home to his flat he was prepared to bet that he would be worrying about the complicated affairs of the Donovans for the rest of the evening.

As it turned out, he was wrong.

First he placated Alice, whom the fog and his continued absence had combined to upset. Then he settled down to attack a prime chop, which had been sitting in the oven for more than an hour and now looked and tasted like pemmican.

It was at that moment that he noticed a letter from Mr. Bullfyne, his literary agent. It was not visibly different from a score of other letters which that energetic gentleman had written to him except that, not being bulky, it could not contain a rejected manuscript. He opened it quite casually.

His shout brought Mrs. Wetherall running.

"Alice, I've sold it! Bullfyne's sold DEATH BY BIG BEN."

"It's not true!"

"In black and white," said Mr. Wetherall. The prime chop grew colder and harder as husband and wife read and re-read Mr. Bullfyne's letter:

I am happy to tell you, that Messrs. Hobnell and Block want to make a contract for DEATH BY BIG BEN. *I have always had confidence that this novel would find a purchaser. Mr. Bertram Block writes,* DEATH BY BIG BEN *is an exciting and readable story, and*

above all, it is a pleasant story. Apart from the word 'bloody' on page 156, there is not a word in it which I should hesitate to read to my children. He offers an advance of £100 on the signing of the contract and a royalty . . .

"Wilfrid!"

"We ought to celebrate."

"Have we got anything in the house?"

"There's some cooking sherry in the kitchen."

By eleven o'clock they had drunk half a bottle of the cooking sherry and had retired to bed to continue spending the five hundred pounds which was the least they calculated to be coming to them from the blessed Mr. Hobnell and the benevolent Mr. Block.

At ten minutes past eleven they turned out the light and settled down to sleep.

At twenty past eleven the telephone rang.

"Perhaps it's an American publisher," said Mrs. Wetherall sleepily.

It was Todd. "Have you seen Sammy?" he said.

Mr. Wetherall came back to the present with an effort. "No," he said. "Why?"

Todd told him.

"You mean he's been missing since six?"

"There's something very odd going on up at Strudwick Road. I was on my way back there, but I've got stuck."

"You mean the fog?"

"Fog and worse," said Todd. "I'm in a call-box near King's Cross. There's a factory on fire, and the engines are blocking both main roads."

"Factory?" said Mr. Wetherall sharply. "Do you happen to know what sort?"

"Hang on a second," said Todd. "I'll find one of the local inhabitants." He came back. "It's a place called Quigleys. Paint and varnish."

"Oh dear," said Mr. Wetherall, and rang off before Todd could start asking questions.

He got on to Scotland Yard, and after some delay, was put through to Hazlerigg, who sounded elaborately unruffled (a very bad sign, as Mr. Wetherall would have realized if he had known him better).

"That factory at King's Cross," he said, without preamble. "Is that the one—?"

"I'm afraid so," said Hazlerigg.

"What happened?"

"We were sixty seconds too late," said Hazlerigg. "That's what happened. One of our cars was actually outside the factory when it went up. From the flash it looked like a Stillson grenade. Prince says Sergeant Donovan simply pulled the pin out, counted two, and dropped it among the five of them."

"Prince?"

"He was nearest the door. He managed to crawl out. He was pretty badly burnt, though. He won't last till morning."

"And Sergeant Donovan. Is he—?"

"My goodness!" said Hazlerigg, with a sudden gust of anger. "Have you ever seen varnish burning? If we find a bone button between them it's all there will be."

"I see," said Mr. Wetherall.

"It would be a help if you could let his mother know," said Hazlerigg. His voice was normal again. "We've got our hands pretty full here."

After he had rung off, it occurred to Mr. Wetherall that he had forgotten Sammy. He hesitated. Hazlerigg had told him that he was busy, but, even so, it would be easy for him to ring up the local station and send a man round to inquire.

His hand was stretched out for the telephone, when his front-door bell rang. He went down the stairs. They had been attic stairs in the original house, and his private front door was at the foot of them. He turned on the light and opened up.

Outside in the passage stood Sammy.

It was perhaps lucky that the passage light was dim. It allowed him to take the boy in by instalments. It was only when Sammy started talking through chattering teeth that Mr. Wetherall realized that he was wet as well as filthy.

"Come up at once," he said, "I'll turn on a bath."

Half an hour later, Sammy, wearing an old pair of Mr. Wetherall's cricket trousers and two sweaters, with a dressing-gown over the top, was sitting in front of the fire. He had a long bruise down one side of his face where he had made contact with the railway embankment, but apart from this he looked as good as new.

One o'clock struck as he was in the middle of it.

"Rolls of money," said Mr. Wetherall, at the end. "You're quite sure about it?"

"Must've been a thousand pounds."

"Not new notes?"

"That's right. Old stuff. Same as these he paid me." Sammy unfolded two notes from his wallet. They had not been good specimens to start with and had suffered further in the canal.

Some words were visible on the back of one of the notes. They had been stamped on with a rubber stamp. Most of it was illegible, but the last word was STORES. Well—Hazlerigg could deal with that sort of thing better than he could. He managed to find two newer ones for Sammy, and folded the exhibits away in his wallet. "You'll have to tell it all over again to the police in the morning, so I won't bother you about it now."

Sammy looked thoughtful. "Is that right? I've got to spill it all to the police?"

"Certainly. Why?"

"And will they pull old Holloman in?"

Mr. Wetherall reflected. " Not at once, I shouldn't think," he said. " But it'll give them something to work on."

" I don't mind them working on him," said Sammy, " so long as they don't let him get working on me. I don't want any part of him, Mr. Wetherall. You've never met him. I can tell you, I'm not going back there, not even to collect my things. I'll get Patsy to call in and fetch them. He's big enough to stand up for himself."

" Patsy," began Mr. Wetherall awkwardly. He'd have to do it some time . . . " I'm afraid—"

The door-bell made him jump.

" Sit still," he said. " You'll catch your death of cold if you start gadding about. I'll see who it is. It's probably Todd." As he walked downstairs, he felt glad that the explanation had been postponed.

Standing in the passage he found a tall, elderly man with a mat of grey-black hair and a mottled, peach-veined complexion.

" Mr. Wetherall ? " said the stranger. " My name's Holloman. I think it's time we had a talk."

Mr. Wetherall's first instinct, a reflex of pure panic, was to slam the door and bolt upstairs. Overcoming this, he said, " I'm afraid I haven't the pleasure— It's very late. Wouldn't tomorrow— ? "

" If tomorrow would have done, I wouldn't have come out tonight. I don't think you'll regret giving me ten minutes."

His wife appeared at the top of the stairs. " Who is it, dear ? "

" It's a Mr. Holloman. *Holloman.*" He spoke as loudly as he dared. He remembered that he had left the living-room door open. " It's quite all right. You get back to bed."

When they reached the living-room, it was empty.

Mr. Holloman sat upright in the chair beside the fire. He did not remove his close-fitting, old-fashioned overcoat. He carried no hat, and his thin, strong hands with their long finger-joints rested lightly at his side.

" Still foggy out," said Mr. Wetherall politely.

Mr. Holloman ignored this. He seemed to be summing up the man opposite him ; searching for something that he was unable to find. There was a very faint note of surprise in his voice when he spoke.

" You'll excuse me," he said, " if I cut out the social preliminaries. It's very late, and what I've got to say can be said quickly. You've been interfering in my business. You removed one boy out of London. Not that it matters now. Anything he knows is out of date. You sent another boy up to spy on me."

" The score seems a little uneven, at that," said Mr. Wetherall. " You had me viciously assaulted."

" All right," said Mr. Holloman. " We'll draw up a detailed balance-sheet—but some other time, if you don't mind. At the moment I'm interested in the present, not the past. You know what happened tonight ? "

" More or less."

" Your friend, Sergeant Donovan, took the law into his own hands—for the second time—and wiped out five men. Six, if you

include himself. He also set fire to a considerable amount of property. It's not under control yet."

" I realize," said Mr. Wetherall, " that it makes things awkward for you."

Mr. Holloman looked at him speculatively. " It could hardly have happened at a more convenient time," he said. " Not if we had arranged it ourselves." He seemed to be serious. " I should explain that we never trust ourselves to one set of people for long."

" We ? "

" The organization I represent. Whittaker was on his way out. Curiously enough, the change was to have taken place tonight. You'll appreciate that such a transaction can be tricky. A man like Whittaker is easier to hire than to sack. That is why— " Mr. Holloman showed his teeth briefly — " we were so grateful to Sergeant Donovan."

" I'm sure you didn't come here just to tell me this ? "

" I came here," said Mr. Holloman, coldly and directly, " to tell you to stop being a fool. Please don't misunderstand me. I'm not giving you a warning. I'm giving you an order."

" And if I don't take orders from you ? "

" You'll take it," said Mr. Holloman. " What are you getting out of this, anyway ? "

" Getting ? "

" Or are you just doing it for the kick it gives you ? "

" Is that all you want to know ? "

" It's not what I came to say. That chapter's finished now. We're starting a few more lines next week, and, to be quite frank, we shall have our work cut out dealing with the police. We don't want any more interference from the touch-line. Got it ? "

" Why," said Mr. Wetherall, and he hoped he said it firmly, " should you assume that I'm going to take the slightest notice of what you say ? "

Mr. Holloman unrolled himself and stood.

" I thought I'd made it plain," he said. " Do you want it in words of one syllable ? We're handing over tonight to a new crowd. I'd give you the name, but it wouldn't mean a thing to you. They work here and on the Continent."

" All right. I quite understand. You're taking on a new set of bullies. For my taste, they can't be more unpleasant than the last lot. I expect I shall survive."

" I wasn't thinking about you," said Mr. Holloman. His eye wandered across the room.

" What do you mean ? "

" When you go out tomorrow morning, are you going to be quite happy to leave your wife behind in the house ? She's not entirely fit at the moment, is she ? It could be awkward, suppose men broke in whilst you were away. They might have to keep your wife from interfering. Tie her up—perhaps."

" They couldn't—"

" They're not a nice crowd. Really, hardly human. They learned

things in Warsaw and Berlin. I don't say they'd kill her. Probably not."

The knife was out now.

"You couldn't do it!"

"I expect you're right," said Mr. Holloman. "Only since it wouldn't be me, the question doesn't arise."

"I'll have to think."

"You've got no time to think." He looked at the clock on the mantelpiece, which showed a quarter past two. "Even now I may be too late to stop some things."

"I must—"

Mr. Holloman moved to the door. "I'm going to be busy after tomorrow," he said. "I'll take your answer now. Yes or no?"

"You leave me no alternative."

"You stop interfering, and you stop running off to the police. If you get in touch with Scotland Yard, we shall know about it."

"Yes."

"That's all right then. Don't bother to come down. I'll let myself out."

After he had gone Mr. Wetherall stood, unmoving. His first coherent thought was, "I suppose Sammy heard all that. It'll save me having to break it to him about his brother."

He went to the door of the spare room.

Sammy was there all right. He was on the bed, fast asleep. Mr. Wetherall put the eiderdown over him and came back to the living-room. He was too shaken up to want to go to bed.

He looked at the clock. Todd might still be at the *Kite*. He got through, but heard that Todd had just gone out again.

"Would you ask him to ring me when he comes back?" he said, and gave the number. Then he put the kettle on for a fresh pot of tea.

His head was down on his chest when the telephone jangled.

"Hullo—Alastair?"

"It's me, Mr. Wetherall."

"Peggy?"

"That's right. A nice thing!" She sounded put out.

"You mean about Patsy?"

"I mean about us. They've burnt our house down. Lucky it was insured."

It occurred to Mr. Wetherall for an instant that he had gone to sleep in his chair, and was dreaming.

"What do you mean? What's happened?"

"Some people just burnt our house down. Got in and piled up the furniture and splashed petrol over it and set fire to it. Ma and me were lucky to get out."

"Are you both all right?"

"I got Ma in with some friends."

"Where are you?"

"In a call-box."

Mr. Wetherall thought rapidly.

"You'd better come round here for the rest of the night. I've

got Sammy here. It's too long to explain over the telephone."

"Sammy. That's good. He's all right then?"

"Yes. He's fine."

"Did I hear you say something about Patsy?"

"I started to," said Mr. Wetherall. "Perhaps I'd better tell you that when you get round here."

"He's dead, isn't he?"

"Yes—I'm afraid he is." He had no idea what to say. There was silence the other end, but he could feel that Peggy was still there, listening.

"He took five of them with him," he added softly.

There was another silence. Then a "clock" as the receiver was hung up.

SCUTTLE

The early hours of that morning had the qualities of nightmare. Time had ceased to count and chronology was upset.

There were isolated pictures in his mind. Of Peggy arriving. Of Sammy waking up and asking to be told what had happened to his brother; and being told and almost immediately dropping off. Of Peggy and Alice asleep side by side in the same bed.

Wakefulness and sleep; tiredness and sorrow; awareness and unawareness.

Mr. Wetherall stirred uneasily in his chair. The clock struck five. A cold light was coming up into the world, and the fog was almost gone. The taste in his mouth was beyond analysis or belief.

He went out to the kitchen where the half-empty bottle of cooking sherry leered at him, until he took it and hid it in the cupboard. He then considered the possibility of a cup of black coffee.

The telephone rang again.

Alastair at last!

At first he thought it was a stranger, the voice was so carefully modulated and controlled. Then he realized that it was his lawyer, Mr. Bertram.

"And what do you want?" he said. "I thought good solicitors never got up before nine?"

"I want you to listen very carefully," said Mr. Bertram, "because I may not be able to get in touch with you for some time after today."

"If it's important I could come round after breakfast—"

"On no account!" Mr. Bertram's voice took on a sharper note, like a circular saw hitting a nail. "I am catching the early train for Harwich. I expect to be out of the country for at least a month."

"I see," said Mr. Wetherall thoughtfully.

"Before I go, there is one thing you ought to know. I was only sure of it myself recently. There's no one with you, is there?"

"No."

"Good. Do you remember the name of the third shareholder in Hollomans Cures Limited?"

"I can't say I do."

"I wrote to you about it. His name is Harbart. Mr. Arthur Harbart."

"I think I do remember something now. Mr. Holloman had one share and his wife had another. And there was an outsider, Mr. Harbart, who had about three. That was it, wasn't it?"

"Yes. I don't suppose above half a dozen people know this—it's done through nominees of course—but you can take it from me that Mr. Harbart controls P.S.D."

"Who—?" he began; then realized that he was talking to a dead telephone. Mr. Bertram had gone.

"Exit First Rat," thought Mr. Wetherall uncharitably.

The kettle came to the boil, and he made the coffee. Whether it was the coffee, or the early hour, or the lack of sleep, his brain, always a useful piece of mechanism, seemed suddenly to be working with exceptional clarity.

The piece of information that Mr. Bertram had given him fell into place.

There was a game he had watched boys playing. He had never been able to make out the rules. One boy stood apart, in a corner, and the others ran off, as far as they could, and brought things back to him.

He was the boy in the corner. It was an impression he had had before. In this game, if he stood still long enough, everything would be brought to him. Just what he was to do with it all when he got it was another thing.

The telephone rang again.

He lifted the receiver, and a strange voice at the other end said, "Mr. Wetherall?" He said, "Yes," and the voice said, "Go ahead," and another voice started talking.

Twice Mr. Wetherall tried to break in.

"Where?" he said at last. "Where did it happen?"

"Chancery Lane Station."

"Where is he now? If I came round now could I see him?"

The voice sounded doubtful.

But without waiting for any more, Mr. Wetherall snatched up his hat and coat. At the top of the stairs he paused for a moment. There was no sound of anyone stirring.

He went down, shut his outer door quietly, and bolted down the rest of the stairs. In the lower hall he pulled up sharply. A man in a raincoat, who had been sitting on a chair beside the door, got up to meet him.

"Good morning, Mr. Wetherall."

Mr. Wetherall had to look twice before he recognized a very young detective constable from Mace Street Station.

"Good morning, Lloyd," he said. "Am I under house arrest?"

"Not yet, Mr. Wetherall. I'm just here to keep an eye on things. I can't stop you going out if you want to."

"Well, I do. I'm going to Bart's. Tell them upstairs if they start worrying. I hope to be back for breakfast."

"I'll do that," said Lloyd. He had a pleasant, soft, Welsh voice.

Outside it was raw. The fog was now no more than a light mist. Mr. Wetherall dived down into the curious, early-morning hush of the Underground. A few workmen and office-cleaners were standing about the platform, unspeaking. In spite of the fact that none of them came near him, or showed any interest in him, he caught himself edging towards the back of the platform.

His early-morning mood was all drained out of him.

He changed trains at Tottenham Court Road, where the crowd was a little larger, and again he kept himself carefully out of the way. At St. Paul's Station he got out and climbed back into the open air.

In that short space of time the mist had blown away, and the sky was full of low, hurrying, grey clouds. He walked past the Old Bailey, crossed carefully, and came by back ways to St. Bartholomew's Hospital. Here he gave his name and waited in a bleak room, and gave his name again and was shown into another bleak room, where a man rose to greet him.

"Mr. Wetherall? Todd mentioned your name."

"How is he?"

"It's too early to be definite. But in my opinion he'll live."

"Thank God for that. Shall I be allowed to see him?"

The doctor looked at him curiously. "You realize," he said "that — had to take the right arm off?" (He mentioned one of the most distinguished surgeons in the country.)

"No, I didn't."

"He won't see anyone but his nurses for a day or two, and I doubt if he'll see them very clearly."

"Of course. I only knew there'd been a bad accident. I'd no idea . . . Can you tell me how it happened?"

"I can tell you what he said. A journalist, isn't he? I imagine he was on his way home. There's an early train from Chancery Lane. I sometimes get it myself. There wasn't anyone on the platform except Todd and two other men. As the train came in they moved up on him, picked him up, and threw him onto the line."

Mr. Wetherall said nothing.

"Luckily he missed the live rail and fell into the trough. Must have thrown his arm up as he fell. The train went over it."

With fingers that trembled, Mr. Wetherall felt in his inside pocket and found a letter, which had arrived the day before. He scribbled his telephone number on the back of the envelope, removed the letter, and handed the envelope to the doctor.

"That's my address, and I've written down my telephone number. Ask someone to let me know how he comes along."

Mr. Wetherall walked quickly out of the hospital, crossed Holborn, went down the lane that leads into Ludgate Hill, and turned right

at the bottom into Fleet Street. He walked with his body thrown forward. His breath was coming in short, dry gasps.

The night commissionaire at the *Kite* was a man who reckoned he had seen everything, but Mr. Wetherall added a new sub-heading.

He did not look mad, and the commissionaire was an expert on madmen. In spite of a night's beard he did not look particularly unkempt. He was just a medium-sized, ordinary, sober citizen in a raging temper.

"I want to see the Editor."

"Yes, sir?"

"My name's Wetherall. Will you tell him I'm here?"

"Would he be expecting you?"

"I can only suggest," said Mr. Wetherall, in his most icily pedantic manner, "that a simple way of ascertaining that would be to ask him."

The commissionaire was not paid his considerable salary for nothing. He took a very deep breath and said, "I'll ring his secretary."

"All right, you do that," said Mr. Wetherall.

The man retired into his sanctum, dialled a number, and said, "I'm very sorry, Mrs. Bolton. Do you know anything about a Mr. Wetherall?"

Mrs. Bolton appeared to cogitate. Then she said, "Yes, I think so. In fact, he might be important. Send him up."

The commissionaire was so pleased with his own perception that he actually smiled at Mr. Wetherall and conducted him to the lift.

Mrs. Bolton was Duncan Robarts' personal secretary. She slept, according to the private tradition of the *Kite*, from Friday evening to Sunday morning inclusive, but at no other time at all. However, she was certainly awake, composed, and affable, when Mr. Wetherall was shown in.

"Mr. Robarts is coming along," she said.

"I haven't got him out of bed, I hope," said Mr. Wetherall with massive indifference.

"Well, *no*. He was up. He got up when he heard about Alastair, poor boy. We had things to fix."

"I see." Mr. Wetherall had not had time to wonder how quite such an eminent surgeon had been conjured on to the spot quite so quickly.

"You look all in," said Mrs. Bolton. "Sit down by the fire. Have you had any breakfast?"

"Thank you. I couldn't—"

"*When did you eat last?*"

"I really don't remember."

Mrs. Bolton must have pressed a bell, and to the man who appeared she said, "Get us some coffee and toast and boiled eggs. Can you eat boiled eggs?"

"Yes," said Mr. Wetherall meekly.

He was in the middle of his second boiled egg when Duncan

Robarts stalked in. Small as he was, the room seemed to shrink.

"Don't get up," said Robarts. "We can talk as you eat. How was Todd when you saw him?"

"They've taken his arm off. They say he's going to be all right."

Robarts perched on the edge of the table. It was obvious that he was in a towering temper. "Once," he said, "I had this thing put up to me—by Todd. I refused to go on. And I still think I was right. As it stood, it was a matter for the police. Now things are different. If we can't look after our own people, we might as well shut up shop. You've been in this from the start?"

Mr. Wetherall nodded.

"There's no need to tell me the story. I know most of it. Todd sent me copies of his reports. Very good reporting, too! But, of course, I couldn't use them. Now it's different. I want to hurt those chaps. I want to hurt them till they squeak."

Mr. Wetherall gulped his coffee and started to say something, but was headed off.

"I don't mean we're going to run crossways to the police. But they can hoe their own row. There are things we can do that they can't. Anyway, we can work up public opinion on our side. Now let's have your ideas."

"Three days ago," said Mr. Wetherall slowly, "I sat in Scotland Yard and listened to Superintendent Hazlerigg. He had it all mapped out. He said that the way to attack these people was from the bottom —until you reached Mr. X at the top. It sounded sense at the time. Now I'm not so sure. To start with, all the minor characters were wiped off last night."

Robarts looked at Mrs. Bolton, who said, "Factory fire at King's Cross. We didn't know it was connected."

"In any case," went on Mr. Wetherall, "I don't think it would have worked. These people change their subordinates too fast for the little men to find out much. It's no good cutting off the hundred arms of this monster. You've got to go for the head. At least, that's what I think."

"Certainly," said Robarts. "Certainly. An excellent idea. Always supposing you happen to know who the head is."

"I do know."

Robarts ruffled like a little angry eagle. "Let's hear about him."

"There's no proof at all. That's the way it's been arranged. But to my mind it's as certain as anything that depends on probabilities."

"Tell us who he is," said Robarts. "We'll work up the evidence later."

"His name is Arthur Harbart. He's head of the wholesale food firm, P.S.D. The only direct connection between him and this racket is that he holds three shares in Hollomans."

"Let's take your word for it for a moment—you might turn up anything we have on him, Mrs. Bolton. I seem to remember the name in some other connection. Company merger or something—if you're right, how do you suggest we set about him? It's apt to be

risky in this country, attacking a man with a good reputation. Expensive, too."

"Yes," said Mr. Wetherall. "I thought of that."

He talked for nearly fifteen minutes. Mrs. Bolton noted the fact as another record. She had never heard anyone, not even a film star, talk to Robarts for fifteen straight minutes.

"All right," said Robarts, at the end. "Let's try it out. It doesn't commit us right away. And I'll get people working on that other little man. You think young Donovan will be able to recognize him?"

"He had a good look at him through the fanlight."

"Get Donovan round here straight away. He can come quite openly. The more people who see him the better. I'll have his statement taken on oath. That's the quickest way of making him safe. And the girl. If we like the look of them we'll take them both on the strength. Would that suit them?"

"It would suit Sammy," said Mr. Wetherall. "He'd be an asset to any newspaper. Peggy too, I should think. She's a good secretary, typing and filing and shorthand and all that sort of thing—and as nice a girl as you could find in the length and breadth of England."

He spoke with such unconscious feeling that Robarts glanced at him for a moment.

"All right," he said. "I'll see they're looked after. They'll be quite safe here. The boy will have to live in a hostel anyway. Mrs. Bolton will fix up Peggy."

"And now for you," went on Robarts. "First, how long is it going to take you to do your stuff?"

"I'll get it off my chest today, whilst it's fresh."

"I'll pay you half in advance and half on delivery," said Robarts, and mentioned a figure that set Mr. Wetherall's tired brain spinning. "That should help you to tidy up your affairs. I take it you will be all right? Yourself, I mean?"

"I shall be all right," said Mr. Wetherall bitterly. "After all, I'm not doing anything difficult. All I'm doing is running away."

He used one of the *Kite* telephones to ring up his flat, where he spoke to Peggy.

"Listen carefully," he said, "because we don't want any slip-ups this morning. First, tell Sammy to come along to the *Kite*—that's it, the newspaper. It's in Fleet Street. He's to ask for Mr. Andrews, that's the staff manager here. He must be careful how he goes, but as long as he keeps his eyes open and keeps away from the edges of platforms and kerbs and that sort of thing, I don't think they can do much to him in broad daylight.

"Then I want you to go to the school. Take a taxi. Mrs. Wetherall will give you the money. When you get there ring up the Committee—you've got all the numbers—suggest twelve o'clock. Some of them may be away, being a Saturday, but get as many as you can. All right?

"Then, one thing more. If you go downstairs you'll find a policeman in the hall. I don't know what orders he's been given, but ask

him to make certain that someone stays on duty until I get back this afternoon. And tonight, if possible. After that it won't matter. We shan't be there. What? No, I can't explain now—"

He rang off quickly.

Peggy had done her stuff. The members of the School Committee were all there. Mr. Wetherall found himself inspecting them with unusual tolerance. He supposed that there was something to be said for the way public education was run in England. Not a great deal, but something. He glanced down at the notes he had carefully prepared.

" I must apologize," he said, " for calling you together at such short notice. But what I've got to tell you is, I think, important, and it's certainly urgent. Monday would have been too late. I must apologize to you for any disturbance or dislocation of school routine which may be occasioned by my present action, but the step I am about to take has been urged upon me by personal circumstances over which I have no control. I shall be grateful if you do not press me on this point. The fact is—" he took a deep breath—" that I have had an invitation to visit Canada. My wife and myself. It's from a Major Francis we knew during the war. I regard it as in the nature of an—ah—cultural tour. It seems to be the chance of a lifetime and, in short, I have accepted.

" I am actually leaving my present flat tomorrow. I am not certain of my date of sailing, but it should be some time at the end of this coming week. In the interval I shall be—er—staying with friends.

" I might add that I am engaged on a series of articles for one of the large newspapers which will defray—in fact, will considerably more than defray—the expense.

" I'm afraid that it was impossible to fit this projected tour into a school holiday. It will take at least six months. The earliest I could be back would be the beginning of next summer term. In view of this uncertainty with regard to my return, I have decided to place my resignation in your hands."

A moment of absolute silence.

" I should perhaps explain," continued Mr. Wetherall, " I hadn't thought to mention it before, but I am, in my spare time, a writer.

" I am happy to say that my first novel has not only been written. It has been accepted. It was this, coupled with the newspaper offer, that made me bold enough to think that I might be able to make a living with the pen."

Having got that far, Mr. Wetherall abandoned his notes and added informally, " I'm really terribly sorry about all this. I have enjoyed myself here and you've all been very tolerant with me."

When the School Committee had dispersed, Peggy arrived with a face of fire, " What's this I hear about them chucking you out? " she asked furiously.

" Shut the door," said Mr. Wetherall, " and stop looking like

a tigress robbed of her young. No one's chucked me out. I've resigned."

"Really, or are you just saying that?"

"You must know me well enough," said Mr. Wetherall primly, "to know that I am not in the habit of just saying things. I am going to Canada almost at once, and I shall be away for at least six months."

Peggy looked at him straightly. "Are you coming back?"

"The matter is undecided."

"I suppose old Edgecumb will be running things?"

"I imagine Mr. Edgecumb may be given temporary control."

"Not over me he won't. I shall get another job."

"As a matter of fact, I have the offer of one for you. On the *Kite*."

"Newspapers, huh?"

"Big men. Smooth types. Take a note, Miss Donovan. If the Foreign Secretary calls—"

"You're not kidding?"

"Certainly not. There's a job for Sammy as well. When you go along—that is, if you like the idea—ask for Mrs. Bolton. She'll look after you. For a start, she'll find you somewhere to put up."

"And you're really getting out? No fooling?"

"No fooling," said Mr. Wetherall. "I've almost gone. You can go along to see the *Kite* this morning, if you like."

"I'd better straighten things up here first," said Peggy. "I've still got last week's milk returns to make out. I'd better get them fudged up—"

"Adjusted," said Mr. Wetherall mechanically.

"—adjusted, before I go."

She whisked out quickly and shut the door. Mr. Wetherall sat staring after her.

CARDS ON THE TABLE

The big car in which Mr. Wetherall was travelling turned north off the Finchley Road.

After some time, the driver slowed, and then turned again. If the previous street had been a tributary, this was no more than a backwater.

The car nosed along, its engine running silently, until the road came to a dead end in a circular run-around of asphalt and turf. Then it turned about and drifted down the other side, the driver watching the numbers.

All the houses were big, all modern, and all expensive, in the style of the 'thirties, in hand-baked brick and rustic tile. They all had their ration of garden in front, defined by side path, front path, and garage run-in.

The car drew up in front of No. 8, and the driver switched off. The stillness and the peace became absolute. Secure behind the buttress of pounds, shillings, and pence, the houses slept out the massive peace of an English Sunday afternoon.

"Quite a dump," said the driver. "We'll wait here for you."

" I may be a little time."

As he spoke, Mr. Wetherall glanced at the occupants of the back seat, and the largest of the three men sitting there nodded reassuringly.

" Be sure to shout if you want any help," he said. " We shall hear you."

" It's quiet enough to hear a bomb go off," agreed his companion.

" Oh, I don't think it's going to be that sort of party," said Mr. Wetherall.

The little man who was sitting in the middle of the back seat, like a prisoner between two large warders, looked up and blinked unhappily, but said nothing.

" Good luck," said the driver.

Mr. Wetherall walked up the neat, flagged path to the cream-coloured front door and applied his finger to a fat chromium bell-push. After a longish pause the door was opened by a maid.

" Mr. Harbart ? "

" I'm not certain if he's in," said the maid. " Would you mind waiting in here ? "

She opened a door, and showed Mr. Wetherall into a morning-room.

It was everything that such a room should be, from the wood-block floor to the built-in white wood bookcases. There was not much furniture, but any bit of it looked worth a year of Mr. Wetherall's work.

Five minutes later, a boy looked in. He was about sixteen, with a lanky body and a pleasant, half-grown face.

" I'm sorry you've had to wait, Mr. Wetherall," he said. " I know father's somewhere about. They're searching for him now."

" That's all right," said Mr. Wetherall.

" He put off his Sunday-afternoon golf when he heard you were coming. I shouldn't think he's done that for anyone else this year."

" I'm sorry to have put him out," said Mr. Wetherall.

He made a grab at his morale, which was slipping fast.

" I don't think he minded, actually," said the boy. " He was down to play a man who always beats him. Dad hates being beaten."

Just then the door opened and Mr. Harbart came in. " Sorry to keep you waiting," he said.

He was in his early fifties and looked, Mr. Wetherall thought, like a retired soldier. A soldier turned business man. There was none of the weakness, none of the spiritual fatness that he had secretly expected. It was the face of a man used to command himself and others ; of a man neither stupidly kind nor stupidly cruel. It was the face of a man who was very sure of himself.

" I hope Tom has been entertaining you ? " he said.

Mr. Wetherall agreed that Tom had been entertaining him.

" All right. You've done your stuff. You can vamoose."

The boy grinned and disappeared.

" It's his long leave from school," said Mr. Harbart, " and much as we both look forward to it, it's sometimes difficult to find things

to fill up the forty-eight hours. Now, what can I do for you ? "

Mr. Wetherall had never felt himself in greater difficulty. He realized that he was being cleverly manœuvred into a position of disadvantage, but it was hard to say exactly how it was being done.

It was not as if he had come out expecting to meet a sub-human character wearing a mask. On the other hand, he had not anticipated that the man would be wearing the tie of a famous public school.

Meanwhile, Mr. Harbart was waiting.

Mr. Wetherall drew a deep breath. " Why did you give up your golf for me ? " he asked.

For a second, Mr. Harbart looked surprised.

" My message," persisted Mr. Wetherall, " was that I wanted to discuss matters connected with P.S.D. Frankly, I should have expected your answer to be that you only talked business in business hours. Your son informs me, too, that you don't lightly give up your Sunday golf. That's why I was surprised."

" Put it down to the approach of Christmas," said Mr. Harbart genially, but his eyes were wary.

Mr. Wetherall sank back slightly in his chair. He knew now that his hunch had been right. However amiable, however correct, however imposing, the man in front of him was a crook.

" I can explain my business best," he said, " by starting with a story. It's the story of a man who founded and built up, between the wars, a very large and profitable wholesale food business. It was a business which sold direct to restaurants and hotels and clubs of all sorts, mostly in London."

" Sounds like P.S.D. to me," said Mr. Harbart. " Do you smoke ? "

" Thank you, no. The man who actually built this business up never appeared directly as head of the enterprise. Partly, I think, because he had an old-fashioned idea that trade was the hall-mark of the lower middle classes."

" *Touché*," agreed Mr. Harbart, lighting his own cigarette.

" Also because he had other interests. He was, I think, a whisky broker in the City. And he was concerned in large-scale tobacco purchase."

" Quite an all-round man."

" As you can imagine, the profits and, of course, the commitments of such a man would have rocketed during the recent war. Equally, he felt the draught very sharply in the years that followed. No more of the easy money of the war years. Instead, increased food rationing, whisky almost unobtainable, tobacco taxed to the limit."

" I weep for him," said Mr. Harbart. " What did he do ? "

" He took to crime," said Mr. Wetherall.

The words fell into a deep pool of silence, broken only by the brisk ticking of the French gilt clock in its glass case on the mantelshelf.

Mr. Wetherall's heart matched the beat of the pendulum.

(Well, what was it going to be ? Flat denial, boisterous laughter, threats ?)

"Do go on," said Mr. Harbart. "I'm sure you haven't come to the end of your story yet."

"If you wish. As I say, he decided to take to crime. But he determined to do so in such a way that his connection with it would defy suspicion. A number of people have had that idea before, but I should think that very few have taken the trouble to work it out quite so cleverly or so thoroughly. What he needed first was a reliable ally. And he had just the man for the job—a Mr. Holloman."

"Holloman? The name sounds familiar."

"I expect it must be, seeing that you are the majority shareholder in the Hollomans Cures Company."

"That's it, of course. The man who runs it calls himself Holloman, doesn't he? It's not his real name, I believe—"

"His real name is Michaels. There's still a record of a Court Martial of a Sergeant Michaels, in Germany, in 1919, in connection with a defalcation in Company Accounts. Incidentally, he was acquitted, after an outstandingly brilliant defence. The defending officer was a Captain Harbart."

"Yes," said Mr. Harbart. "Yes." The way he said it, it was quite without emphasis, yet it sounded, somehow, like a qualified admission.

"When this gentleman decided to turn to crime, he thought of Holloman, who, I might add, had not been idle since his lucky escape in 1919. In that time he had served one stiff sentence for blackmail and one for embezzlement, and had founded and dissolved no less than three patent-medicine businesses. Two had failed for economic reasons, one through police interference after complaints from purchasers who had bought an embrocation which contained an unfortunately high element of pure caustic.

"Despite these failures, he was still convinced—and I should hesitate to say that he was wrong—that all you need to succeed handsomely in that line is experience and sufficient capital. The experience he had. The capital was lacking. The gentleman I mentioned was therefore well placed to do a deal with Holloman, who possessed every possible qualification for a crook's middleman.

"He could be counted on for loyalty. He knew all the necessary small fry in the criminal world. His wife, a considerable character in her own right, kept a public house in Soho which served as an admirable meeting-ground between Holloman and the rank and file. In short, he was the perfect instrument. All he needed was intelligent handling."

"And the intelligence," said Mr. Harbart with a smile, "was supplied by your hero?"

"Certainly. Figure it out for yourself. In his own way, he was even better placed than Holloman. The field, in which they were pioneering, was the organized distribution of stolen food and drink. This man had all the proper contacts. In a legitimate way of business—and his own business, remember, continued on strictly legitimate lines—he knew every restaurateur, hotel keeper, and club caterer in London. He knew what was plentiful and what was scarce. What they

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could obtain legitimately and what they had to fiddle for. He had a shrewd idea, too, as to which of them would be likely to fiddle."

"It sounds like money for jam," said Mr. Harbart. "And just the sort of thing to appeal to a man who had money already. It's only the rich man who has any incentive to crime these days. If he makes ten pounds honestly, he has to give away nine to the state. On the other hand, every penny he fiddles he keeps for himself. Yes. Highly profitable, I should imagine. And very difficult to bring home to—your hero. Unless Holloman chose to talk. He doesn't sound to me to be the talking type."

"I agree," said Mr. Wetherall.

"And even more difficult to prove in Court."

"Possibly so. However, you will remember the saying that there are two things that can never remain entirely secret—the spilling of blood and the payment of money."

"Hm," said Mr. Harbart judgmatically.

"Arrange the matter how they would, there was still this difficulty to surmount. At some time and in some way, Holloman had to pay over to his employer his share of the profits. His employer was living in a style—" Mr. Wetherall allowed his gaze to wander for a moment round the room—"a style that called for frequent and sizable injections of ready money. He had an expensive household and a wife to maintain and a son and daughter at well-known schools."

"Shall we," said Mr. Harbart, in a voice from which all trace of affability had vanished, "leave our families out of this?"

"No," said Mr. Wetherall, "we shall not."

Mr. Harbart half rose in his seat. "I presume you want to finish this conversation?"

"Yes. But so do you. If you hadn't you wouldn't have let me get as far as this."

Mr. Harbart resettled himself slowly.

"Apart from which, this talk of leaving families out of it strikes me as one-sided. You may not be aware of it, but your friend Holloman paid me a visit in the early hours of yesterday morning. His object was to tell me that unless I ceased to interfere he would arrange for his employees to manhandle my wife—beating up of women is one of their specialities. He did not actually add—but the suggestion was there—that she was far enough pregnant for the treatment to be especially effective in her case."

"I see," said Mr. Harbart. His voice was under control again, but it was rough at the edges. "I notice we are dropping the third-party fiction. That's all right. Finish your story. I'm looking forward to the moment when you come to the proof."

"I've very little more to say. You held three shares in Hollomans Company. It looked innocuous, but it gave you control of what capital you had loaned him. It did more. If, in spite of all your precautions, and the roundabout way it was managed, and the fact that all payments were in cash—if, in spite of all this, it should be possible to demonstrate that large sums of money had passed from Holloman to you—then you had your answer ready made. Any

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money you got was your share in the profits of the extremely profitable Hollomans Company."

Mr. Harbart said, " Ah." If he had said, aloud, " So you know that too, do you ? " it could not have been plainer.

" One other thing. If you were to preserve the fiction that your only connection with Holloman was that you happened to hold a few shares in his company, then plainly, you had to guard against seeing him, or even telephoning him, too frequently. You needed a further intermediary. And that is where, if I may criticize, you were a little bit too clever. You chose a creature of yours—a man called Helliby."

" Ah," said Mr. Harbart again.

" I believe he's your personnel manager. Something like that. Anyway, he was yours to promote or sack, yours to make or break, yours from the soles of his feet to the top set of his state-owned dentures. He would do what you told him and keep his mouth shut. Right. So he would.

" But what you hadn't calculated on was this. Observing so much profitable fiddling going on all round him, he started fiddling himself. Which was quite fatal. Because Holloman caught him at it. And has been blackmailing him ever since. The *Kite* identified Helliby last night, and he made a statement this morning."

There was a silence.

" And is that all ? "

" That's it."

" And do you seriously imagine you can frighten me with some statement made, under pressure, by one of my own employees ? No Court will listen to it ! "

" I'm inclined to agree with you," said Mr. Wetherall. " In fact, I was present this morning at a conference with the legal adviser to the *Kite*. He advised us that our evidence was insufficient to lead to a prosecution."

" I see," said Mr. Harbart, slowly. " Nice of you to tell me."

" That is really why I've come to see you this afternoon. I have brought with me—" Mr. Wetherall dipped into his document case— " a full and factual account of your activities. At least, it's as full as we've been able to make it in the time. It's quite comprehensive. There's a short bit at the end, saying that you've read it through and agree with it. We want you to sign it."

There was a further instalment of silence.

" Assuming for a moment that this isn't some elaborate sort of practical joke," said Mr. Harbart, at last, " perhaps you wouldn't mind explaining just why I should do anything of the kind ? "

" Certainly. If you refuse, the *Kite* is to start publication, almost at once, of a series of articles. I wrote them myself, so I can assure you they are good, strong stuff. And most outspoken. No ' Mr. X ' and ' Mr. Y.' Real names and addresses and everything. Perhaps you'd like to see my maiden effort ? "

He dipped again into the case and brought out a folder. Mr. Harbart opened it.

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"Where did you get that photograph?"

"Is that the one of you and your wife? I don't know. All the big newspapers have a lot of these things on their files. The penalty of fame. There's rather an amusing one of your son winning the high jump at his prep school, but I think that comes in the second article."

"You'd never dare—"

"It's going to save a lot of trouble if I simply quote to you what Counsel said to us this morning: 'You haven't got enough to found a criminal prosecution, but there's a wide difference between criminal proceedings and civil proceedings, and in my view you've got enough to put up a fighting defence to any libel action you may provoke. You'll have to plead justification and the public interest and go the whole hog. You may even get away with nominal damages. It'll be a jury case, and juries don't love black marketeers!"

"It would never come to a libel suit. The Court would stop the printing—"

"We considered the point. If it was a book, you might be able to do that, but a daily paper's not all that easy to stop. Suppose you got your injunction on the same afternoon that the first article appeared. It would already be too late. The damage would be done. You'd be forced to sue. And that would afford further opportunities for—shall we say, developing the story?"

"I don't believe that any responsible newspaper—"

"Responsible fiddlesticks!" said Mr. Wetherall. "This is the mildest of three schemes that Robarts had in mind. What he really wanted was a spontaneous lynching. And I believe he could have organized it, too. You really ought to have left Todd alone."

Mr. Harbart said nothing. He was turning the folder over and over in his fingers, not looking at it.

"Tear it up, if you like," said Mr. Wetherall helpfully. "We've got dozens of copies."

Mr. Harbart looked up. His face was white, but his eyes were ugly. "Have you thought about your own position if you try to go through with this?"

"Hot air and nonsense!" said Mr. Wetherall. "If that's the last shot in your locker, we can get down to business. I'm off to Canada—with my wife—in a few days' time. I don't believe that your organization will be likely to bother me much there. And if you're thinking of pressing a button and summoning the boys, I might as well warn you that I've brought my own escort with me. They're all crime reporters. One happens to be a middle-weight boxer as well."

Mr. Harbart went over to his chair and sat down.

"What is your proposition?" he said.

"It's quite simple. You sign what amounts to a confession. Then you close down the whole machine. And the existence of this confession will ensure that it stays closed down."

"I see."

"And if you're worrying about Holloman, you needn't. He's going to have plenty of worries of his own quite soon. Whether he,

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for his part, will be prepared to take what's coming to him and keep his mouth shut—that's a chance you'll have to take."

"And if I sign this document, I have your word that nothing further will happen—provided I keep my side of the bargain?"

"That is correct," said Mr. Wetherall, looking at him curiously.

"And I have to rely on your word for that?"

"You have to rely entirely on my word."

Even at that point Mr. Wetherall could not avoid the thought that a lesser man would have hesitated longer.

Mr. Harbart picked up his pen.

"Wait a minute," said Mr. Wetherall. He went to the window, threw it open, and beckoned.

A moment later, three more visitors were being shown into the room. Mr. Harbart stared hard at the small man who stood between his larger companions, but he said nothing. The small man looked everywhere except at Mr. Harbart.

"Just watch him signing, Mr. Helliby. Then add your name underneath his as a witness. That's right. You'd better initial each of the pages, too. Splendid. Then we won't take up any more of your time, Mr. Harbart. Don't bother about the maid. We can show ourselves out."

A moment later the front door banged.

From outside came the noise of a car starting up. Increased, diminished, and muttered away into the distance.

Mr. Harbart sat without moving. He sat so still that when the maid came in she thought the room was empty.

"Well, that's that," said Mrs. Wetherall. "It's been a rush, but I think we've fixed everything. Lucky it was a furnished flat. They're easy enough to get rid of."

"Easier to get rid of than get hold of," agreed her husband.

"If we've a moment to spare for it we ought to have a little victory celebration."

"It's not a victory," said Mr. Wetherall. He was cross and tired. "At the most, a sort of success."

"Well, I call it a victory! And I'm sure you deserved it." She presented him with a kiss. "And now Timothy's going to be born a little Canadian. I'm told the hospitals are very good out there."

"He'll be born in Canada. That won't make him a Canadian."

"Well, I'm sure it's all come out for the best. Though why you ever had to get mixed up in it at all—"

It was people, really, thought Mr. Wetherall. When it came to the point, you'd do things for people that you'd never dream of doing for patriotism or politics or principles. Unimportant people. People like Peter Crowdy, and Luigi, and Sammy and Peggy, and Alastair Todd—and his own wife, too. But you could never explain it to her.

"The fact of the matter is," he said, and was aware as he said it that it sounded silly, "that I've always been against bullying. Someone starts a thing like this, and he takes a risk, and if it comes off he makes a profit, like any other business, and it seems all right

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at his end. But at the other end, it always seems to come down to plain bullying. That's really all there is to it."

"What I'm sorry about," said Mrs. Wetherall, "is that no one's ever going to publish those articles, after you took so much trouble over them, too. I know the *Kite's* paying for them anyway, but that's not the same as seeing your name in print."

"You never know," said Mr. Wetherall. "Perhaps, some time—it would mean changing all the names and places round a bit, of course,—but perhaps some time I might be able to make a book out of it."

Michael Gilbert's novel is to be published by Hodder & Stoughton under the title "Fear to Tread."

* * *

ARGOSY PRIZE CROSSWORD

PRIZE-WINNERS OF CROSSWORD NO. 1

We are pleased to announce the three winners of Argosy's first Prize Crossword Competition :

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These readers, who sent in the first correct solutions to be checked on the closing date, each receive a one-guinea book token.

SOLUTION

Across. 1, *Mandrake.* 5, *Boring.* 10, *Revulsion.* 11, *Erato.* 12, *Ears.* 13, *Shrillness.* 15, *Soloists.* 16, *Araby.* 18, *Clerc.* 19, *Contents.* 22, *Brilliance.* 24, *Wolf.* 26, *A bang.* 27, *Pantomime.* 28, *Knotty.* 29, *Armament.*

Down. 1, *Murder.* 2, *Nevermore.* 3, *Roll.* 4, *Knights.* 6, *Overloaded.* 7, *Irate.* 8, *Grossly.* 9, *Snails.* 14, *Torchlight.* 17, *Authorize.* 18, *Cab rank.* 19, *Clasps.* 20, *Nicanor.* 21, *Effect.* 23, *Imago.* 25, *Nora.*

PRIZE CROSSWORD NO. 4

Argosy's fourth Prize Crossword Competition appears on page 144. There will be one-guinea book tokens for the first three correct solutions checked on the closing date. Entries should be completed *in ink*, and posted to : ARGOSY PRIZE CROSSWORD (No. 4), 3, Pilgrim Street, London, E.C.4 (Comp.) to arrive by Wednesday, September 9th, the closing date.

We regret that entry must be limited to readers living in Great Britain, Northern Ireland, the Channel Islands and Eire. There is no entry fee and the Editor's decision is final.

Names of the prize-winners in this competition and the solution will appear in the issue of Argosy on sale November 10th.

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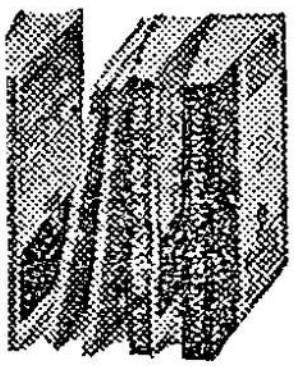

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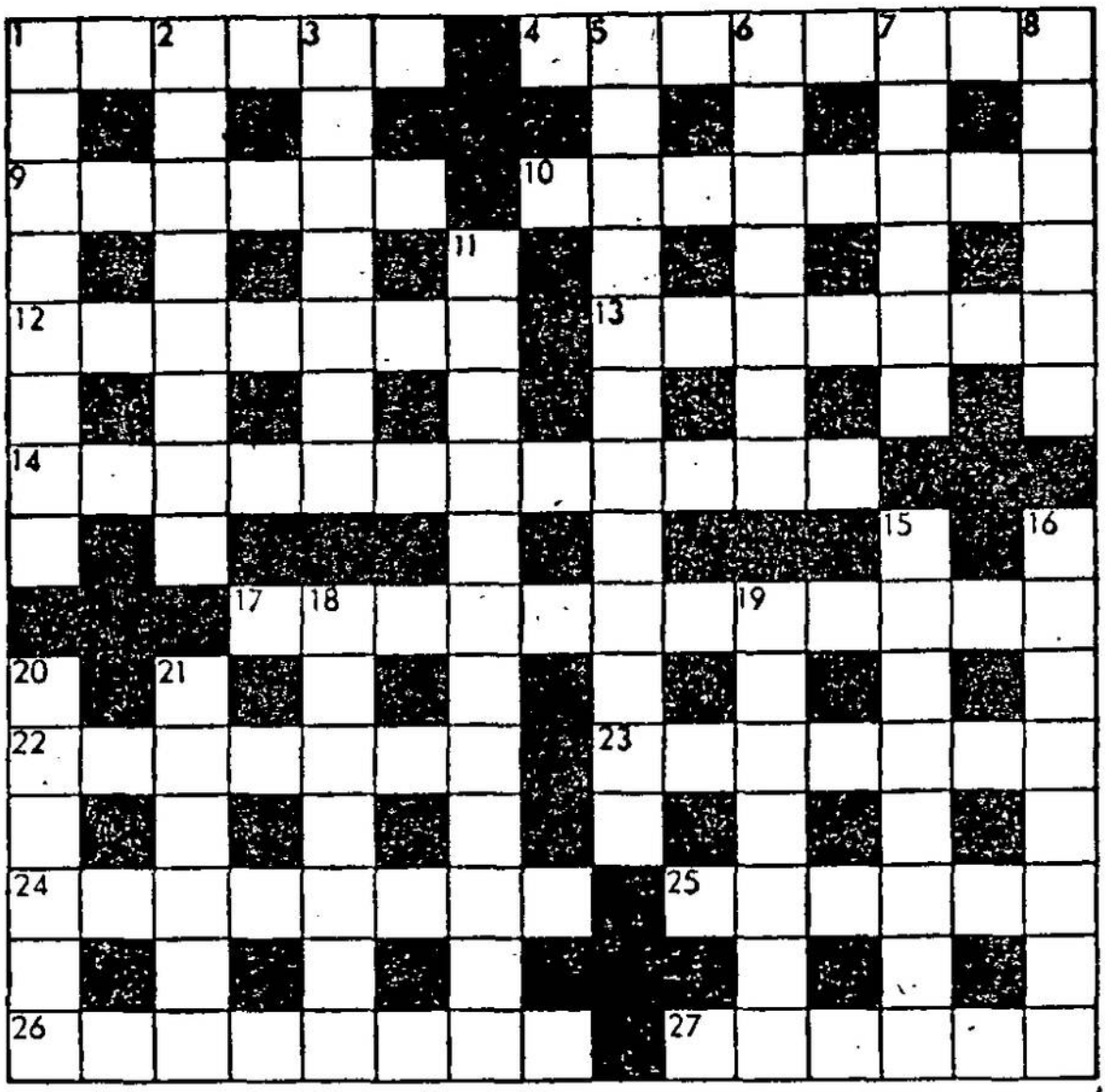

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CUT ALONG THIS LINE

CLUES

Across

1 The garments sound uncomfortable (6).

4 Boxing belt in Cumberland (8).

9 The junior cavalry officer is equipped with ice-cream (6).

10 "Thou ever strong upon the — side!" (Shakespeare) (8).

12 One toss involves the least delay (7).

13 Butterfly monarch (7).

14 O rat, bite lion! Rubbing out is the natural result (12).

17 Give a gratuity to the fish-skin? You'll upset the balance (3, 3, 6).

22 The camel has swallowed the artist. How sweet! (7).

23 Vegetable origin of the water-supply? (3–4).

24 Following shock this makes for comfort (8).

25 Such dicta, apparently addressed to a bad-tempered dog, are not binding (6).

26 Naomi asked to be left in this condition (8).

27 The official stops short of forming a business combine (6).

Down

1 Store kept by a jovial friar? (4–4).

2 Gutter-urchin outside a church! (8).

3 On that account the theatre is disturbed (7).

5 Paving stones are found in this deplorable situation (2, 3, 7).

6 Don't get bitten by this Zodiacal sign! (7).

7 "We defy —; there's a special providence in the fall of a sparrow" (Shakespeare) (6).

8 Headless fears are quite mistaken (6).

11 They're tale-bearers but not sneaks (5–7).

15 Give little Edward what has been assigned (8).

16 With broken toes the hero of "Little by Little" joins an exclusive group (8).

18 I claim to be virtuous, but on the whole I'm the opposite (7).

19 In the competent manner of one qualified for the first XV? (7).

20 Lightning from the French pastrycook (6).

21 Is port the right material for a drinking salutation? (6).

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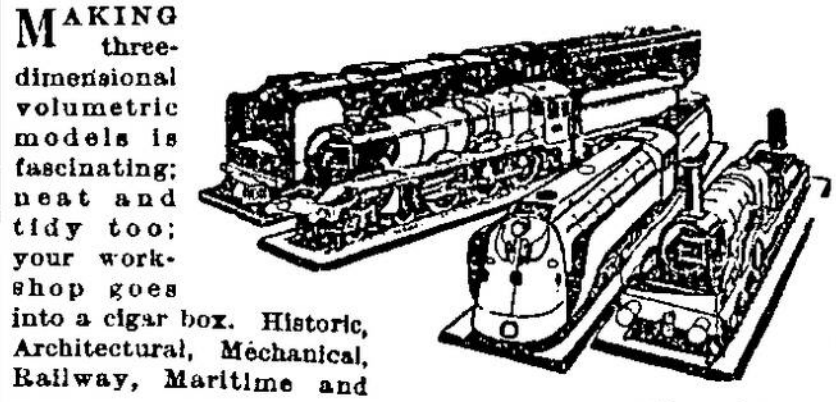

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